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INTRODUCTIONS TO THE
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INTRODUCTIONS TO THE POETS

By

W. F. RAWNSLEY, M.A



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Dedication.

TO

MRS. F. GREENE,

OF RYDINGHURST, CRANLEIGH,

THE ORIGINATOR AND PRESIDING GENIUS

OF OUR LITERARY SOCIETY.



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PREFACE

IN the following introductions to the Poets the Author lays no great claim to originality. As Hon. Secretary of a Literary Society started for the encouragement of those who cared for poetry and wished to improve their acquaintance with it, he thought that it would greatly add to the usefulness of the friendly afternoon meetings in one another's houses if each first reading of a Poet's works were prefaced by some account of the Poet himself, his life and circumstances, and the history of his work. These accounts are in most cases a digest of what had been already published by various writers, with such added criticism as seemed likely to be of use or interest. And they are usually short, as the writer always felt that he was somewhat tyrannically taking up the time of the Members whose object was to read or listen to the poems selected and discuss them afterwards.

In preparing the papers for the Press they have been in some instances enlarged and poems have been inserted which at the Meetings were read after the paper. Of the Browning paper, only the

first part has been read. That on Tennyson differs from all the rest in that it is written entirely from personal knowledge. It is longer than the others, and is in fact a lecture which the Author was invited to deliver on the occasion of the Tennyson Centenary in 1909, but having been by request read at one of the Literary Society's Meetings it has been included in the present volume.

The Society for which the Papers were written was formed in October 1905. It consists of some thirty members, with an average attendance of about half the number. Its period of activity is seven months of the year, from October to December and from February to May inclusive, with an occasional meeting in January and June. During the six years of its life it has held fifty-eight meetings, averaging one in every three weeks. The "Subjects" have been twenty in number, of which Browning and Tennyson have been the most constantly recurring—in fact out of the fifty-eight those two have taken up one half, Browning eighteen and Tennyson eleven; the remaining half being distributed thus:—

SHAKESPEARE

4. Richard II, Hamlet
two readings, and
Henry VIII.

SPENSER

3. The Faerie Queen, Book
I. two readings, and
The Minor Poems.

MILTON	3. The Minor Poems. Comus, and the 1st half of Paradise Lost.
CHAUCER	2. The Prologue to The Tales, The Prioress's Tale, and some short Poems, and 2ndly "The Nonne Preestes Tale."
SHELLEY	2.
WORDSWORTH	2.
MATTHEW ARNOLD	2, one being Sohrab and Rustum.
GRAY	1.
BURNS	1.
COLERIDGE	1.
KEATS	1.
BYRON	1. Childe Harold.
LONGFELLOW	1.
G. ROSSETTI	1.
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI	1.
SWINBURNE	1. Atalanta in Calydon.
THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND.	
OLD BALLADS.	

Of these Chaucer and the minor poems of Spenser were to many almost a new discovery. But the greatest revelation of all was Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon. In this fine poem the lyric beauty of the choruses and the excellence of the

blank verse are only surpassed by the tragic pathos of the story. The conflict between the love of her brothers, a feeling so strong in every Greek breast, and the natural affection for her own offspring so finely depicted in the Mother's recollections of her first-born baby son, a conflict which at last gives way, when too late, in a storm of regret over the terrible deed of her own hands, is treated with the greatest skill; and the sorrow that the hero expresses at the loss of all this pleasant life, and that not in battle or by the chances of the hunt, but in the house and by his own mother's act, and the affectionate way in which, notwithstanding, he makes excuses for her when he is dying, make up a tragedy of the most moving character. It was curious, after reading it, to see what a failure the play proved on the stage. There the chanting of the choruses quite obscured the beauty of the language, and all the charm of Swinburne's melodious verse. Then Atalanta's great speech, so touching and beautiful to read, became a mere stage declamation, while the poem supplied no dramatic situations to relieve the long speeches of one character after another.

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THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF ARTHURIAN WRITERS

AUTHOR.	WORK.	DATE.
Geoffrey of Monmouth	<i>Historia Regum Britannie</i>	1140 (about)
Wace . . .	French translation of Geoffrey	1155
Chrestien de Troyes	Various legends: especially <i>Conte du Graal</i> (unfinished)	1150 to 1182
Layamon . .	<i>Brut d'Angleterre</i> . .	1200 (about)
Walter Map . .	<i>Sangreal, Lancelot du Lac. Roman de la Mort Artus.</i>	1190 to 1215
Malory . . .	<i>Le Mort D'Arthur</i> . . Printed by Caxton in	1480 (about) 1485

THE Golden Age of “*Chivalry*” was from the middle of the eleventh to about the beginning of the fifteenth century, or, to put it better, between the Norman Conquest and the Battle of Agincourt.

It was not till the *twelfth century* that *Geoffrey of Monmouth* wrote his *Tales of King Arthur and the Round Table*, which were the source of much romantic poetry in this period and afterwards.

In the *twelfth and thirteenth centuries* the “*Trouvères*” of the North of France, who were the off-

spring of the "Trobadoours" of Provence, travelled to England and sang in court and castle the doughty deeds of Alexander, Charlemagne, the Norman Roland, Havelok the Dane, Richard Cœur de Lion, Guy of Warwick and King Arthur and his Knights.

In 1205 *Layamon*, a Worcestershire monk, who was the first Englishman who wrote in his native tongue, finished his translation of the *Brut d'Angleterre*—a Metrical Chronicle of England in Norman French—which the Norman writer *Wace* had founded on Geoffrey of Monmouth's prose stories of Arthur. Layamon introduced some Welsh stories, unknown to Geoffrey, and his poem reaches to 32,000 lines. Certainly he was the first to sing of King Arthur in *English* as distinct from pure *Saxon Verse* (see *Early Philology of the English Tongues*, p. 48, extract from Layamon). So we may call him the first English poet, Caedmon and Cynewulf in the seventh and eighth centuries being Saxon.

German Mediaeval poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is divided by Schlegel into three groups:—

(1) The Legends concerning *Gothic, Frankish and Burgundian warriors*, such as are treated in the thirteenth century in the *Nibelungen-lied* and in "The Hero Book."

These legends have usually, but not necessarily, an historical foundation.

(2) The Chivalrous poetry which took *Charlemagne* for its topic. In this, History gets more and more overlaid with fable and even at last with comic humour.

(3) The Stories of the British *Arthur and the Round Table*. Here the German singers have to do with a Christian King of Celtic origin in Britain, who was destined to represent the ideal of perfect chivalry and knightly virtue. But amongst these poems we frequently find *love* introduced, and some of these love poems have a plaintive Elegiac sadness of character, as in *Tristram and Isolt*. (His very name indicates this.) Often again the ideal knight, whether Arthur, Lancelot, Amadio of Gaul or Palmerine of England, is a glorified counterpart of some real men whose deeds are recounted in Froissart's Chronicle, e.g. The Black Prince or Sir Walter of Manny, or Sir John Chandos and, finally, this group has often a peculiarly allegorical character, especially in the *San Graal* Series, which embodies the conception of a Spiritual Knighthood. This resulted from the influence of the Crusades of the twelfth century, which Gibbon says were both a cause and an effect of Chivalry. Certainly the Crusades aroused the imagination, while the Crusaders also brought back from the East Persian and Arabian tales which are the creations of a more exuberant fancy than belongs to the peoples of the West. Of this third group The Arthurian legend became in the thirteenth century a prodigious favourite in Germany.

The name Arthur probably has the same signification as Pendragon, which means *Caput Regum*, Ardheer or Ardhreg (= The Arviragus of Juvenal) meaning *summus Rex*.

Cassibelan was chosen "Pendragon" at the time of Julius Caesar's invasion and we hear of both Arthur Pendragon and Uther Pendragon.

OLD BALLADS

THE Ballad, which has been called the nugget or uncoined gold of British poetry, is both in name and origin a dance-song, i.e. a song to dance to, the word being connected with the Low Latin and Italian *Ballare*, Greek *βαλλίζειν*, and French *baller*, meaning to dance. The English "ball" meaning a dance is from the French *bal*, of which our word ballet is a diminutive. All ballad forms are said to have come originally from Italy and through France to England whence they spread to Scandinavia and Germany. In Iceland a "danz" means a song; and as song and dance went together, the same word did for both.

The Ballad at first had a refrain, a chorus imitative of the clapping of hands in Spanish dances and in some of our own country dances at certain recurring points in the dance. For instances of how the clapping would come in with the beats of the refrain take the ballad of *Mary Ambree*.

Was not *this* a brave bonny lasse, *Mary Ambree* ?
O *what* a brave *captaine* was *Mary Ambree* !

P. R., i. 399.

where every fourth line (like the two just quoted) represents four claps of the hand. Or the Elizabethan ballad *The Beggar's Daughter of Bednall Green*, with its recurring burden with four beats in every fourth line.

For *none* was so comely as pretty Besse,
Soe *faire* and well favoured was pretty Bessee.

Or take *The Lykewake Dirge*, where every second line represents three claps of the hand. See the last piece in Bell's *Golden Book* of ballads.

This æ night the æ nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and sleet and candle lighte,
And *Christe* receive thy saule.

When thou from hence away art past,
Every nighte and alle,
To Whinnie Muir thou com'st at last;
And *Christe* receive thy saule.

This is similar in its beats to the old song, *London Bridge is broken down*, and its meaningless refrain "*with a gay ladee*." In *The Nut-brown Mayd* the last two lines of each stanza make seven beats.

For *in* my minde of *all* mankinde
I love but *you* alone;

P. R., i. 361.

and another round or Dance Song with a well-known refrain of seven beats is *A Frog he would a wooing go*, which has seven beats—

With a *role*y *poley* *gammon* and *spinach*
Heigh *ho* says Antony Rowley.

The very fact that these refrains are meaningless shows that the claps of the hands were all that was needed or listened for and where no words were needed any words would do.

The old French word *rondel* is in English Roundel or Round, and its diminutive *rondelet* is in English Roundelay, the spelling "*lay*" being a confusion from the word "*lay*" which means a song and is possibly akin to the German "*lied*," and this Rondel

or round means a song in which a verse keeps on coming round again and again, just as in the early ballad. In the Middle Ages it was often the custom that the dancing and singing of these *rounds* took place in the churchyard, which brought them into contact and opposition with the strong puritan element in Catholicism, and hence perhaps the decline of the ballad, which in England flourished chiefly in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. The ballads were handed down orally as was the case with the first poetry of all nations, and many repetitions and variations crept into them. Those that we have in the Percy reliques are mostly of the fifteenth century and onwards, for the *Street* ballad, as distinguished from the *dance* ballad, came in later, and is a narrative in simple verse. Of course the ballad surviving through several centuries, has undergone various transformations and the name has been given to pieces which are in no sense ballads either in subject, extent or character; for the *character* should be simple and popular, and was often rude in style, the *extent* short, containing only one episode, and the *subject* some valorous deed or some tragic or touching story. Moreover it should be adapted to be sung or accompanied musically. When expanded, the ballad became a lay, e.g. Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* or Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, where, as in the modern German ballads descriptions of scenery and much dialogue are conspicuous. The chief German ballad writers are Burger with his *Leonore*, Schiller, Goethe with the *Erl König*, and Uhland.

In Italy even in the twelfth century madrigals

and lyrical love songs were called ballads : and in so far as the ballad was a narrative it *was* the parent of the earlier epics ; and the greatest heroic poems, such as the Spanish “ Cid ” and the German “ Nibelungen ” grew out of this beginning.

The best of our ballads are the Border Ballads. *The Battle of Otterbourne*, which begins—

It fell about the Lammasse tyde,

tells of a border raid, for booty, not a hunting expedition, and describes the battle which was fought in 1388, in the reign of Richard II and in the lifetime of Chaucer.

The Ancient Ballad of Chevy Chase, which means the hunting on the Cheviot, was written in the reign of Henry VI, two generations later. It begins—

The Perse out of Northumberlande,

and the writer mixes up the details of the fight at Otterbourne with the account of a border hunting raid.

Another version called *The More Modern Ballad of Chevy Chase* was Elizabethan. This is the one usually read and it begins—

God prosper long our noble King.

Other good fourteenth and fifteenth century ballads are *Fair Helen of Kirk-Connell Lee*, *Sir Patrick Spens*, *William of Cloudesley* and *The Nutbrowne Mayd* and later in date *The Gentle Herdsman* (which is Goldsmith's model for his beautiful ballad *Edwin and Angelina* and *The Friar of Orders Grey*).

Of quite modern times Scott's *Young Lochinvar*,

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Coleridge and *The Ballad of the Revenge* by Tennyson are the most notable things of this kind, and the stirring "Barack-room Ballad" *East and West* by Rudyard Kipling. Some ballads deal with *magic*, but many of the early English and Scottish ballads have mostly to do with love and rapine and the barbarous deeds of border strife and are not always pleasant reading. The most notable of these are *Clerk Saunders*, *Edom O' Gordon* and *Edward Edward*. But by degrees the ballad got more refined in taste, till, at the *end* of the fourteenth century, it attained a sudden perfection in the hands of Chaucer, and from this the advance to Elizabethan lyric was easy.

The ballad, if long, was divided into parts called 'fytts,' and spelt indifferently fit, fitt, fyt, fytt, fytte. *Fit I.* = *part I.* But it is the same word that we use in the expression "by fits and starts," i.e. pauses and fresh starts. A long ballad, for the convenience of singing it, at a feast or public entertainment, was sung by fits or interruptions.

Puttenham, in his *Art of English Poesie*, 1589, says that "the Epithalamie was divided by breaches into three parts to serve for three several *fits* or times to be sung."

In the ancient ballad of Chevy Chase—

The first *fit* I here find,

means here I come to the first pause or intermission, and so, after the first 112 lines of *The Battle of Otterbourne*, we find the words "A Fytte." By degrees the term came to mean the whole part preceding the pause, and this had become its meaning

as early as Chaucer's time (the fourteenth century), for in his *Rhyme of Sir Thopas* he says—

Lo, Lordes myne, heer is a fit!
If ye wish any more of it,
To telle it wol I fonde. (=try) ;

and in the ballad of *Adam Bell, Clym o the Clough and William Cloudeslie* Part I ends with—

Here is a fyt of Cloudeslie,
And another is for to saye;

and Part II with—

A second fyt of the mightie yeoman :
Another I wyll you tell.

BALLADS SELECTED FOR READING

From vol. i. of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient British Poetry*. Published by G. Bell & Sons, 1878.

- Page 3. *Fit I of The Ancient Ballad of Chevy Chase* (fourteenth century) ; part II of *The more modern do.* (fifteenth century), p. 180.
- „ 41. *Edward Edward.* A Scottish Ballad.
- „ 54. *Sir Patrick Spens.* [*Ballad Book*, p. 60, but a better version is in the *Oxford Book of Verse.*]
- „ 80. *Edom O' Gordon.*
- „ 106. Parts of *Adam Bell, Clym o' the Clough and William Cloudeslie.*
- „ 139. *Take thy old Cloak about thee.* Cf. Shakespeare's *Othello.*
- „ 208. *My mind to me a Kingdom is.*
- „ 265. *The Nut-browne Mayd.* (Part of), sixteenth century.
- „ 337. *The Heir of Linne.*
- „ 302. *Gentle Herdsman, tell to me.*

Page 176. *The Friar of Orders Grey.*

This on which the *Bailiff's Daughter of Islington* is founded—is made up of bits from Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher.

Compare also p. 129 for the grave-digger's song in *Hamlet*, Act v., and p. 130 for Jephthah Judge of Israel. *Hamlet* ii. 7.

From *The Ballad Book*, Golden Treasury Series.

Page 1. *Thomas the Rhymer.*

„ 4. *The Twa Corbies.*

„ 95. *The Jolly Goshawk.*

„ 115. *Fair Annie of Lochroyan.*

„ 121. *The Likewake Dirge.*

„ 356. *Helen of Kirkconnell Lea.*

„ 211. *Kinmont Willy.*

„ 144. *Young Beichan.* Compare with this *Lord Bateman's Daughter*, by Thackeray.

CHAUCE R

1340-1400

LOWELL holds that the Anglo-Saxons never had a real literature of their own ; they produced monkish chronicles and legends of saints, but their poetry was essentially Scandinavian. It was through the Normans that the English mind was first inspired with the grace and lightness of Romantic literature. The Troubadours of Provence, taught by the Moors who had themselves imbibed something of culture from the Greeks, first showed that songs could be made in the tongue of the country people, but their style soon left the provincial and popular form to become the highly artificial mouthpiece of chivalry ; and it was their Northern French or Norman offspring, the *Trouvères* singing with a vigour which smacks of the soil and is not free from a certain native coarseness, whom we must regard as the true originators of our modern literature. For the literary existence of all languages dates from its early poetry. It is the taking hold of the speech of the people, using and refining it and thus revealing its power, that is the proper work of the poets. No poet did more in this way than Chaucer.

Now, poetry flourishes most, when, for one reason or another, there is an exalted state of

national feeling. Hence the poetic outbursts in the time of Edward III, Queen Elizabeth, the Commonwealth, Queen Ann and Queen Victoria.

In the time of Edward III the enthusiasm of the English nation had been brought to its highest pitch by the ambition of the king to seize the crown of France ; and never did the pulse of a nation beat higher than at the news of the victories of Crecy and Poitiers, A.D. 1346 and 1356.

The times of Chaucer were also stirring in the annals of the *Church*—the first great Reformer was his contemporary, and by *Wiclif* the Bible was brought from the sepulchre of a dead language and made a living book in England. It is thought that Chaucer was writing with his eye on Wiclif when he described the *poor Parson* in his prologue to the Tales.

The times moreover were not without signs of *civil* convulsion, and produced the first struggles of the peasants and serfs of England for some beginnings of liberty and individuality.

This was the condition of the times in England when Chaucer appeared.

Abroad *Dante* was Chaucer's one great precursor in Europe. Born a century before Chaucer—1265—he died at the age of 56 in 1321, nineteen years before Chaucer was born, leaving Petrarch a youth of 17 who died at the age of 70 when Chaucer was 34. Both poets, Dante and Chaucer, had similar opportunities of culture, and as Dante had in his veins some Northern Teutonic blood adding a strength to his moral sense, so Chaucer had possibly some Southern blood which gave an elegance remarkable and unprecedented to his tongue ;

but their subjects are different ; Dante's subject is the Soul—Chaucer's is Life ; subjects not antagonistic but wide apart as holiness and prudence. Hence Dante is a universal, Chaucer a national poet.

With the exception of Langland—author of *Piers Ploughman* and author of that beautiful thought *Mercy is sib of all sinful*—Chaucer's predecessors in England were versifiers and not poets, their subjects were classic or mediaeval legends. Chaucer gives us lively pictures of real life, and though he did not make the English language, it may truly be said that he found it a dialect and left it a language—and this language was formed on the dialect of the East Midlands which had less marked features than the dialects of the East, North, South or West and was therefore the easiest to take and form a language upon, and becomes thenceforth the literary language of England.

“Sib” means kin. And here let me quote from Lowell on the style of Chaucer's contemporary *Gower*.

“ In order to feel fully how much he achieved, let any one subject himself to a penitential course of reading in his contemporary, Gower, who worked in a material to all intents and purposes the same, or listen for a moment to the barbarous jangle which Lydgate and Occleve contrive to draw from the instrument their master had tuned so deftly. Gower has positively raised tediousness to the precision of science, he has made dulness an heirloom for the students of our literary history. As you slip to and fro on the frozen levels of his verse, which give no foothold to the mind, as your

nervous ear awaits the inevitable recurrence of his rhyme, regularly pertinacious as the tick of an eight-day clock, and reminding you of Wordsworth's—

Once more the ass did lengthen out
The hard, dry, seesaw of his horrible bray,

you learn to dread, almost to respect, the powers of this indefatigable man. He is the undertaker of the fair mediaeval legend, and his style has the hateful gloss, the seemly unnatural length of a coffin. Love, beauty, passion, nature, art, life, the natural and theological virtues, there is nothing beyond his power to disenchant, nothing—out of which the tremendous hydraulic press of his allegory (or whatever it is, for I am not sure if it be not something even worse) will not squeeze all feeling and freshness and leave it a juiceless pulp. It matters not where you try him, whether his story be Christian or pagan, borrowed from history or fable, you cannot escape him. Dip in at the middle or the end, dodge back to the beginning, the patient old man is there to take you by the button and go on with his imperturbable narrative. You may have left off with Clytemnestra, and you may begin again with Samson ; it makes no odds, for you cannot tell one from t'other. His tediousness is omnipresent, and like Dogberry he could find in his heart to bestow it all (and more if he had it) on your worship. The word *lengthy* has been charged to our American account, but it must have been invented by the first reader of Gower's works, the only inspiration of which they were ever capable. Our literature had to lie by and recruit for more than four centuries ere it could

give us an equal vacuity in Tupper, so persistent a uniformity of commonplace in the *Recreations of a Country Parson*. Let us be thankful that the industrious Gower never found time for recreation!" (*My Study Windows*, J. R. Lowell, page 234.)

But Chaucer besides being a poet and the foremost maker of our English language is one of the best of story-tellers—he avoids monotony by a skilful arrangement of pauses. He does not give undue prominence to minor details—he says in the *Man-of-Law's Tale*—

Me lists not of the chaff nor of the straw
To make so long a tale as of the corn,

and again in the end of *The Nun Priest's Tale*—

Takith the fruyt and let the chaff be stille,

and he was not in the habit of making lines of pure stuffing in order to bring in the rhyme as Gower constantly does, e.g.—

This maiden Canacee was hight,
Both in the day and eke by night.

He is always cheerful and abounds in common sense and in sympathy—witness in the *Clerk's Tale* his expostulation with the Marquis for his cruel trials of his wife in Boccaccio's story of *The Patient Griselda*; and his English was so good that, passing over the claims of *Layamon*, many say fearlessly that Chaucer first wrote English, and we know that 200 years later Spenser studied his method and his language and called him "Master." With regard to his English what can be better than this?

Thou Polymnia
 On Pernaso, that, with thy sisters glad(e),
 By Helicon, not far from Cirrea,
 Singest with voice memorial in the shade,
 Under the laurel which that may not fade.

Surely that might have been Milton, and again—

Hide, Absolom, thy giltë tresses clear,
 Esther lay thou thy meekness all adown,
 Make of your wifhood no comparison ;
 Hide ye your beauties Ysoude and Elaine,
 My lady cometh, that all this may distain—
Legend of Good Women, 203.

quite Spencerian—and here is another bit with the Elizabethan ring about it—

The busy lark, the messenger of day,
 Saluteth in his song the morning grey
 And fiery Phoebus riseth up so bright
 That all the orient laugheth at the sight,
 And with his streames drieth in the greves
 The silver droppes hanging on the leaves.
Knight's Tale, 633.

A simple diction and an ear for melody are Chaucer's guiding stars, and if at times he is betrayed into fine writing he can turn round and laugh at himself as in the lines

Till that the brightë sunne had lost his hue
 For the orizont had reft the sunne his light
 (This is as much to sayen as "it was night").

Let us now note two or three of the main characteristics of Chaucer's writing. And first of all we may note that Chaucer loved outward nature, not simply to make "copy" of it, but as a source of conscious pleasurable emotion. When the Troubadour hailed the return of Spring it was with

him just a piece of empty ritualism ; but Chaucer took a true delight in the green leaves and the singing of the birds. Then he is himself *natural*, he does his best things as it were inadvertently. This gift, if not genius, is what makes genius loveable, and it is a gift ; " if a man have it not, he will never find it, for when it is sought it is gone "—It reminds one of St. Augustine's answer to the question " What is time ? " " I know when you don't ask me."

Next we may observe how well chosen and simple are his *epithets*. Of a woman he tells us that she was "*fresh*," that she has "*glad*" eyes. Then, he has a *pithy* way of saying things, and in a single line gives a humorous turn to a story. Sometimes he describes by a mere hint ; thus, when the Friar before sitting himself softly down, drives away the cat, we know without need of more words that he has chosen the snuggest corner.

Next we must note that Chaucer is pre-eminently *human*, with a broad genial humanity. Hence his chief skill was in the delineations of his characters ; these are imperishable because he paints the type rather than the individual, and *W. Blake* truly said of him : " Names alter, things never alter : as Newton numbered the Stars, and as Linnaeus numbered the plants, so Chaucer numbered the classes of men." You see this class or type-painting in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* in such descriptive lines as that of the Doctor of Medicine whose " Study was but little on the bible," of the Sergeant at Law " who always seemed busier than he was " and of the Merchant who keeps so steady a countenance that " there wist no

wight that he was e'er in debt." His fun comes out when he speaks of the doctor and the apothecary playing into one another's hands—

For eche of them made other for to winne
Their friendship was not newè to beginne.

His satire is always kindly: he sets the world before us as he found it and where he blames he does it with good humour. "He was," as Lowell notices, "a reformer, too, not only in literature but in morals. But as in the former his exquisite tact saved him from all eccentricity, so in the latter the pervading sweetness of his nature could never be betrayed into harshness and invective. He seems incapable of indignation. He mused good-naturedly over the vices and follies of men, and, never forgetting that he was fashioned of the same clay, is rather apt to pity than condemn. There is no touch of cynicism in all he wrote. Dante's brush seems sometimes to have been smeared with the burning pitch of his own fiery lake. Chaucer's pencil is dipped in the cheerful colour-box of the old illuminators, and he has their patient delicacy of touch, with a freedom far beyond their somewhat mechanic brilliancy." Finally he turned from allegory to the actual world and it is by his insisting on a definite purpose in art, by his vivacity, cheerfulness and simplicity that he shows himself the true founder of what is characteristically English Literature, the father of English poetry, "The Morning Star of Song."

The journey from London to Canterbury was fifty-six miles, but such were the roads in the fourteenth century that it took four days. The

company numbered twenty-seven apparently, and at the suggestion of the Host who promised a supper to the teller of the best tale, they told these stories to beguile the time. The first tale was the *Knight's* about the love of Palamon and Arcite for Emily the beautiful sister of Duke Theseus of Athens. The *Miller*, the *Reeve* and the *Cook* follow with tales suited to the coarseness of their natures, for which Chaucer, in later life, makes an apology. The *Cook's* is unfinished, and ends after fifty-eight lines with the words—

Of this Cokes tale maked Chaucer na more.

Passing through Deptford and Greenwich they arrived late in the afternoon at Dartford, and put up for the night.

Next day began with the *Man of Law's Tale*, which is the tale of Constance, the *Shipman's Tale* (a coarse one) followed, and then the *Prioress* tells her pretty tale of the little murdered chorister. *Chaucer* himself follows with the dull tales of Sir Thopas in verse and Melibeas in prose. The *Monk* comes next and instead of a good hunting story which the Host called for he reels off a string of tragedies till he is stopped as being too depressing and the *Prioresses*, attendant Priest, or the *Nun Preeste*, tells his tale of the vanity by which a gallant Cock fell a victim to Reynard the Fox, but eventually escaped, and this brought the Pilgrims to Rochester which was their second halting place.

These two journeys had been of fifteen miles each. Next day they did sixteen, and had only ten to do on the last day.

Many of the *Tales* are unfinished, or left without the final touches, or, having been in earlier years written for one character are in the *Tales* put into the mouth of another. Hence *The Nun* speaks of herself as "a Son of Eve" and the *Shipman's Tale* seems to have been meant for the *Wife of Bath's* second *Tale*.

The *Clerk's Tale* was written earlier and had some stanzas added and the *Knight's Tale* is entirely re-written from two previous stories. It is in rhyming Heroic couplets, and it is probable that all the *Tales* written in couplets were composed after 1386 when he began to devote himself entirely to The *Tales* and those in stanzas before.

The *Nun Priest's Tale* is also written in these Heroic couplets.

Chaucer, like Spenser, did not carry out his whole intention or we should have had 120 *Canterbury Tales* instead of twenty-four, and he reproached himself towards the end of his life for the grossness of some of the *Tales*, notably those taken straight from Boccaccio and in *his* time and country considered not unfit for ears polite. This reproach Spenser never had any need to make to himself, for though he too has his lines which we might wish suppressed, this is simply due to the fact that, though himself the soul of purity, he lived and wrote in the unblushing days of Good Queen Bess.

With respect to metres Chaucer introduced several from Italy, viz. the eight-line stanza with three rhymes arranged in the order *ab-ab-bc-bc*, the seven-line stanza *ab-ab-bcc* (e.g. *The Man of Lawe's* and *The Clerke's Tale*) and the rhyming

Heroic couplet of ten syllables as in *The Legend of Good Women*. Both Dryden and Pope made great use of this last metre which is still common in English poetry.

SPENSER

1552-1599

EDMUND SPENSER was born in London ¹ in 1552, twelve years before Shakespeare and about a year before the hideous Marian fires began to blaze in his native parish of Smithfield. Edward VI died in 1553, Mary in 1558. Besides Shakespeare, his contemporaries in England were Sir Walter Raleigh, Camden, Hooker, Sir Philip Sidney, Drake, Bacon, Ben Jonson, Robert Devereux Earl of Essex, Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester and Queen Elizabeth, to all of whom he was well known; outside of England Tasso published his *Gierusalemme Liberata* in 1582. He went from Merchant Taylors School to Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1569. Leaving Cambridge he went for a year at least to the North of England, where he wrote *The Shepheardes' Calendar* in which under the name of *Colin Clout* he complains to *Hobbinol*, i.e. his Cambridge friend, Gabriel Harvey, of his ill success in his wooing of *Rosalind*, "The Widdowe's daughter of the Glenne." The work is in twelve eclogues, one for each month of the year. It is dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney and was published by Spenser's Cambridge friend, Edward Kirke, in 1579-80. This was at the beginning of the

¹ See *Prothalamion*, lines 128-132.

most splendid period of our literature, "The Elizabethan period," and Spenser being now in London was, through Sidney's introductions, able to mix with the most brilliant intellectual society of the day. Under the name of Tityrus, Spenser refers more than once in *The Shepheardes' Calendar* to Chaucer as his Great Master, for instance in "June" he says—

The God of Shepheards, Tityrus, is dead,
Who taught me homely, as I can, to make :
He, whilst he lived, was the soveraigne head
Of Shepheards all that bene with love ytake :
Well couth he wayle his woes, and lightly slake
The flames which love within his heart had bredd,
And tell us mery tales to keepe us wake
The while our sheepe about us safely fedde.

And again in "December"—

The gentle Shepheard satte beside a springe,
All in the shadow of a bushye brere,
That Colin hight, who well could pype and singe,
For he of Tityrus his songs did lere :

Chaucer had lived 200 years before, but no great poem had been brought out in England during those two centuries which can compare with Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The revival of learning had more to do with the appearance of the poem than *The Canterbury Tales* had, and to this revival with its classical influence the rise of our Pastoral poetry in imitation of Theocritus and Virgil is certainly due.

"*The Shepheardes' Calendar* conteyning twelve Æglogues proportionable to the 12 monethes, entituled to the noble and vertuous Gentleman most worthy of all titles both of learning and chevalrie

Maister Philip Sidney " was brought out as stated by the poet's college friend, Edward Kirke, who explains the term *Æglogue* as " goatheards' " tales.

And such they were with Theocritus the creator of Greek Pastoral poetry, but with Virgil they became *Shepherds'* tales and are called Eclogues.

The poem is partly autobiographical, telling of his unsuccessful love for " Rosalind." But the fourth month's aeglogue is all in praise of Queen Elizabeth. Six years later Sir Philip Sidney's death at Arnheim at the age of 32, from wounds at the battle of Zutphen, 1586, was commemorated by Spenser in the poem *Astrophel* and in the *Pastorall Æglogue* in which Lycon and Colin are Spenser and Sidney, and again in 1590 he writes some beautiful verses about him in his poem *The Ruines of Time*. Sir Philip Sidney was buried at St. Paul's.

In *Astrophel*, which he dedicated to The Countess of Essex, *Clorinda* is Lady Pembroke, Sidney's sister, and " The doleful lay of Clorinda " is put into her mouth. In this year, 1590, it was that the first three books of the *Faerie Queene* were published and so well received that the publisher got together all that he could of Spenser's writings and brought out a book of *Complaints* on the vanity of worldly things as compared with spiritual. This volume contained *The Ruines of Time*, which was to some extent autobiographical, *The Teares of the Muses*, dedicated to Lady Strange for whom Milton wrote his *Arcades*, *Virgil's Gnat*, *Mother Hubbard's Tale or Prosopopoia*, *Muiopotmos*, etc. Probably in the same year (1590) and before he returned to Ireland, Spenser brought out *Daphnida*, an elegie on the death of Henry Lord

Howard's daughter, the wife of Arthur George, Esq., and then when he got back to Ireland he wrote *Colin Clout's come home again*, which he sent with a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, December 27, 1591. In his letter he says: "I make you a present of this simple pastorall that you may see that I am not alwaies ydle as yee think though not greatly well occupied, . . . The which I humbly beseech you to accept in part of paiment of the infinite debt in which I acknowledge myself bounden unto you, for your singular favour and sundrie good turnes, showed to me at my late being in England." The conclusion of the poem tells of his still enduring affection for *Rosalind* who had turned a deaf ear to him some eleven or twelve years before. At line 540 he speaks of the three Ladies Spencer.

In life praiseworthy are the sisters three,
The honor of the Noble familiee :
Of which I meanest boast myself to be ;

for though he spelt his name with an s he was proud to belong to the Spencer family.

In the sixth book of the *Faerie Queene*, Canto X, he describes his love as a fourth maid present with the three Graces to whom alone he pipes (see st. 14-16 and 25 and 27).

The last of his poems were written in England in 1596. These were the *Hymns to Love and Beautie*, dedicated to the Countesses of Northumberland and Warwick, and the *Prothalamion* "a spousall verse" in honour of the double marriage of the two Ladies Somerset daughters of the Earle of Worcester. All his contemporaries agree in thinking that he had fully intended to write

six more books of the *Faerie Queene*, e.g. Browne in his *Britannia's Pastorals*, ii. I, says—

But ere he ended his melodious song,
An host of angels flew the clouds among,
And rapt the swan from his attentive mates
To make him one of their associates—
In heaven's faire choir.

We have made mention of several of Spenser's minor poems, and when we study them and see their great beauty it is more and more difficult to understand how it is that they are so little read and known. Pastoral poetry has always a unique charm and *The Shepheardes' Calendar* is full of beautiful passages. *Muiopotmos* is very fine. The description of Arachne's tapestry in which she figured Europa on the Bull is unsurpassable.

She seem'd still backe unto the land to looke
And her playfellowes aid to call, and feare
The dashing of the waves, that up she tooke
Her daintie feete, and garments gathered neare :

But the loveliest lines of all are to be found in the *Epithalamion*, his own triumphant Wedding Ode. It is written in stanzas of some eighteen lines or so with a refrain, thus—

Open the temple gates unto my love,
Open them wide that she may enter in,
And all the postes adorne as doth behove,
And all the pillars deck with garlands trim,
For to receive this saint with honour dew,
That commeth in to you.
With trembling steps, and humble reverence
She commeth in before the Almighty's view ;
Of her ye Virgins learn obedience,
When so ye come unto those holy places,
To humble your proud faces :
Bring her up to th' High Altar, that she may
The sacred Ceremonies there partake,
The which do endlesse Matrimony make ;

And let the roring Organs loudly play
The praises of the Lord in lively notes ;
The whiles with hollow throates,
The Choristers the joyous Antheme sing,
That all the woods may answere, and their echo ring.

This stately Alexandrine at the end of each stanza is used with effect in the *Faerie Queene*, in which the stanzas are but of half the length, being made up of eight lines of rhyming Heroics and an Alexandrine or line of twelve feet at the end. There are but three rhymes in the stanza, thus distributed : lines 1 and 3 rhyme, lines 2, 4, 5 and 7, and lines 6, 8, and 9. This arrangement the poet has made so entirely his own that it is now generally known as *the Spenserian stanza*.

The publication of Spenser's pastoral *The Shepheardes' Calendar* put him at once into the front rank of poets. Michael Drayton speaks of it thus : " Maister Edmund Spenser has done enough for the immortality, had he only given us his Shepheardes Calendar, a masterpiece if any." He wrote several bits before 1580 which were afterwards incorporated in the *Faerie Queene*. The metre he chose for that did not meet the approval of Gabriel Harvey, who was of the Classical School, and he tried to get Spenser to write in hexametres. In 1580, by Lord Leicester's influence, he was appointed Secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton who was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He was also made Clerk of Degrees (with a good salary) in the Irish Court of Chancery and had a lease of the lands and Abbey Manor of Enniscorthy. This he sold in 1581 to Richard Synot, who again sold it to Sir H. Wallop and it has been in the Wallop family ever since. In 1582 he returned to London

with Lord Grey who had resigned. But he retained his Clerkship, and soon returned to Dublin, Again in 1590 he came to England with Sir Walter Raleigh to publish the first three books of his *Faerie Queene*, but the rest of his life with these two breaks was nearly all spent in Ireland. There, in 1587 he wrote *Colin Clout*, writing, as he says more than once, "on salvage soyle," but these were not published till 1595. In 1588 he obtained by purchase the Clerkship of the Council of Munster, and as his friends had obtained for him from Queen Elizabeth a grant of a large estate, over 5,000 acres, at a nominal rent of £17 7s. 6d. at Kilcolman, co. Cork, part of the territories forfeited by the Earl of Desmond in 1586, he was very well off. In 1589 Sir W. Raleigh visited him and read the first three books of the *Faerie Queene*, of which Spenser writes—

And when he heard the music that I made
He found himself full greatly pleased at it.

It was Raleigh who induced him to revisit England in 1590, and presented him at Court to Queen Elizabeth. He read her some of the poem, probably the parts about Gloriana and Belphebe, which characters were meant to represent Elizabeth, and which he tells us,

"by the measure of her own great mind" she declared to be "of wondrous worth."

The three books were printed and Elizabeth gave Spenser a pension of £50, equivalent to £250 in these days.

He was now provided with both a house and an income, and in 1592 or 1593 he fell in with an

'Elizabeth'; he tells us in Sonnet 74 that her name was the same as that of his mother and his Queen. She was probably a Boyle and lived at Kilcoran near Youghal in the South of Ireland. He speaks of "The sea that neighbours to her near." For two years he wooed her and the varying ups and downs in the course of his wooing are set forth in eighty-eight Sonnets or "*Amoretti*." In Sonnet 67 he speaks of her relenting. It begins "like as a huntsman," and at length on June 11, 1594, on St. Barnabas Day (= N.S. June 21, see *Epithalamion*, 267, etc.) he married her, and his lovely *Epithalamion* is a song of delight and triumph at his final success. She was undoubtedly beautiful. Whilst writing the Sonnets and *Epithalamion* he was also engaged on the last three books of his *Faerie Queene*, and in Book X he thus refers to his love: "and yet she certes was a countray lasse." This may mean a country and not a town-bred girl. In 1596 he brought his wife and the three next books of the *Faerie Queene* and the MS. of his prose work on the state of Ireland to London, where the six books of the *Faerie Queene* were printed together. In 1597 he returned to Kilcolman and next year Elizabeth recommended him as Sheriff of Cork; but the Munster Rebellion broke out in that year and he, as a follower of the severe methods of repression of Lord Grey, was specially obnoxious. He had to flee in great haste; and in the confusion the youngest of his three little ones was left in the Castle of Kilcolman, which the rebels sacked and burnt; all his papers and possessions perished in the flames and his child was never heard of again.

Spenser reached England broken hearted and three months later died at Westminster on January 16, 1599, at the age of 46. Jonson says "for lacke of bread," which is hardly credible. He was buried in the Abbey by the Earl of Essex, in the South Transept or "Poets' Corner" and next to Chaucer; poets, we are told, bearing his pall and throwing funeral odes into his grave together with the pens they were written with. His two sons, Silvanus and Peregrine, grew up and his widow married a Mr. Seckerstone. The Queen ordered a monument to be erected over him, but the money was misappropriated by her agent, and the present monument was set up in 1620 by Anne, Countess of Dorset.

THE "FAERIE QUEENE."

In Spenser's time printing was not so far advanced but that MSS. were often multiplied and a work thus went round amongst the author's friends for some years before it was set up in type. His prose dialogue between *Eudoxus* and *Irenoeus*, called *A View of the present state of Ireland*, had quite a considerable circulation for nearly fifty years before its publication in 1633, and the three first Books of the *Faerie Queene*, begun in England not later than 1579, were also circulated in MS. We can fix this date thus. Spenser's Cambridge friend and senior, Gabriel Harvey, when asked to return it with a promised criticism, writes to Spenser in Ireland in April 1580, "I had once again nigh forgotten your *Faerie Queen*; howbeit, by good chaunce I have nowe sent hir home at the laste neither

in better nor worse case than I founde hir." He goes on to say that he thinks much more highly of his *Teares of the Muses* than of his "Elvish Queene." Again in 1582 at a Literary Society meeting in Dublin, Spenser, when asked to write a treatise on Moral Philosophy, excused himself in the following words: "For sure I am, that it is not unknowne unto you, that I have already undertaken a work tending to the same effect, which is in heroical verse, under the title of a Faerie Queene to represent the Moral Vertues, assigning to every vertue a Knight to be the patron and defender of the same, in whose actions and feates of arms and chivalry, the operations of that vertue, whereof he is the protector, are to be expressed, and the vices and unruly appetites that oppose themselves against the same, to be beaten down and overcome, which work as I have already well entered into, if God shall please to spare me life that I may finish it according to my mind, your wish will be in some sort accomplished, though perhaps not so effectually as you could desire." So, clearly, by 1582 he had made some way with his work. His plan was for twelve Books, but he only wrote six, for though some may have perished in the flames when his castle in Ireland was burnt it was probably not much; all that we have is a couple of cantos called *Mutabilitie*, which may have been meant to form a part of some following Book. The letter to Sir W. Raleigh prefixed to the first three Books published in 1590 at Sir Walter's instigation, was omitted when in 1596 those three were published again with the next three added. They were brought out by W. Ponsonby, a stationer, the

printer of the first three being John Wolf ; but it is interesting to know that the 1596 edition was printed by R. Field at Stratford-on-Avon who had, in 1593 and 1594, printed Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. He used as his device an anchor twined with laurel : and we see in Sonnet xxviii that Spenser's badge also was a laurel. For a full account of the allegories in the poem and of the metre, as well as for an eloquent appreciation of Spenser as a poet, see Kitchen's Introduction to the Spenser Volume in the *English Classics Series* published by the Clarendon Press at Oxford. He quotes from Hallam's *Literature of Europe*, Part ii., Chap. 2, where he says that " The First Book is generally admitted to be the finest of the six ; . . . that the Red Cross Knight designates the Militant Christian, whom Una, the true Church, loves, whom Duessa, the type of Popery, seduces, who is reduced almost to despair, but rescued by the intervention of Una and the assistance of Faith, Hope and Charity, is what no one feels any difficulty in acknowledging, but what every one may easily read the poem without perceiving or remembering. In an allegory conducted with such propriety, and concealed or revealed with so much art, there can surely be nothing to repel our taste : and those who read the First Book of the *Faery Queene* without pleasure, must seek (what others perhaps will be at no loss to discover for them) a different cause for their insensibility than the tediousness or insipidity of allegorical poetry. Every canto of this book teems with the choicest beauties of imagination ; he came to it in the freshness of his genius, which shines throughout."

Allegory nowadays has few admirers and it seems that Spenser himself had doubts as to the proper understanding of his poem even by literary people, for he wrote a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, dated 23 Januarie 1589, beginning, "Sir, Knowing how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed, and this booke of mine, which I have entituled *The Faery Queene*, being a continued Allegorie, or darke conceit, I have thought good, as well for avoyding of jealous opinions and misconstructions, as also for your better light in reading thereof, (being so by you commanded) to discover unto you the general intention and meaning, which in the whole course thereof I have fashioned."

JOHN MILTON

1608-1674

DECEMBER 9, 1908, was the tercentenary of the birth of John Milton.

It was celebrated in March by the Columbia University of America when the only existing MS. of the first book of *Paradise Lost* was shown, and at Christ's College, Cambridge, in the summer, and in December in London amongst other things by a special meeting of the British Academy convened to do honour to the genius of Milton, and also by an exhibition of MSS. portraits and early editions, at the British Museum. Here was shown the register of the church of All Hallows', Broad Street, with the following baptismal entry :—

"The xxth day of December, 1608, was also baptized John the sounne of John Mylton, Scrivenor."

This precious volume was lent by the Rev. A. W. Hutton, of the Rectory of St. Mary-le-Bow. The old church of St. Mary-le-Bow in Cheapside contains the Milton tablet which was formerly to be seen in the neighbouring church of All Hallows, in which the poet was baptized, and here we may notice the father's name is spelt in the register with a 'y,' but we need not put too much stress on that as the word son in the same line is spelt

soune, one spelling bearing no more authority than the other.

Milton's family Bible, with eight autograph entries by the poet, was also shown, and Henry Law's original autograph music for five of the songs in *Comus*, and various other interesting documents down to the autograph MS. of Tennyson's fine lines published in the *Enoch Arden* volume, beginning—

O mighty mouthed inventor of harmonies,
O skilled to sing of time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages.

The mass meeting at the Whitefield Central Mission Building in Tottenham Court Road took the form of a Milton Tercentenary Celebration, and there the Master of the Rolls presided and said that—

“Most men thought of Milton simply as a poet. They recognized him as a master of harmonious verse, as the writer of many exquisite sonnets and lyrics, and as the author of the epic, *Paradise Lost*. All that was true; but there was another side of Milton with which they were not perhaps so familiar. Milton's prose writings were but little read. They contained a great deal that was not altogether consonant with the taste and the temper of our time; but they included patches of the most splendid diction to be found in the literature of England, and they embodied ideas that had now become almost parts of our nature. John Milton was above all a devotee of liberty; he was a devotee of public liberty, a devotee of

liberty in the sense of freedom of thought, of freedom of expression, of freedom of the Press, and above all of religious freedom."

The Master of the Rolls was followed by the Lord Advocate, who, laying stress on Milton's strenuous championship of Liberty, said that he defended religious liberty against prelacy, civil liberty against the Crown, liberty of the Press against the Executive, liberty of conscience against Presbyterians, and domestic liberty against the tyranny of the canon law.

I take it for granted that we all know that Milton's life as an author is divisible into three periods: (1) His *Lyric* period ending before he was 30. (2) His *Prose* period extending over twenty years. (3) His *Blank Verse* period in which, when blind, he wrote the two great poems he had been preparing for all his life, and which were followed by *Samson Agonistes*, full of pathetic autobiographical touches, but not up to the majestic level of his great life-poems, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. It was published in 1670 or 1671, and in 1674, at the age of 65, he died.

And now to return to the Tercentenary Celebration.

The Master of Peterhouse, addressing the Members of the British Academy, said that "there was nothing alien to the spirit either of Milton's life or of Milton's art in the tribute then being paid. To his soaring genius the thought of an undying fame and the desire of it were habitual; but the appeal which he made was not to the 'broad rumour' of a thoughtless world—neither the world to which he was unknown in the pure tranquillity

of his youth, nor that which hurried past the blind solitude of his declining years. Before the greatest of his works was completed he knew to what height his name would be raised unless the perversity of fate should 'damp his intended wing'; and, when his work was done, his imagination, speeding into futurity with steady flight, would not have disdained that clear recognition of later ages which comes slowly to the greatest, and imperfectly even to them. The lecturer then asked his audience to think of Milton at two stages of his life: first in 1638, when after his seven years at Cambridge and five in studious seclusion at his father's house at Horton, he went, on the eve of his Italian journey, to call upon Sir Henry Wotton, the aged Provost of Eton. Milton was then in the beauty of early manhood, with 'fair large front, and eye sublime,' and hyacinthine locks hanging in clusters 'round from his parted forelock'; the author, already, of *Arcades* and *Comus*. It was not, as it had been with Goethe, the Italian visit which separated, as by a golden bar, the earlier from the later half of his career, for the influence of classical antiquity was already strong in him. It was rather the anticipation of his return to England, where a new responsibility, as he believed, awaited him, which caused him, as it were, to recast the framework of his plan of life and work. The second stage was a generation later, in the still years which preceded his peaceful death, when he needed no stimulus, and asked for no encouragement. In the interval had come the controversial pamphlets. Voices had not been wanting to charge him with obliquity of judgment in turning aside

from divine poesy to barren controversy. Turning aside indeed ! barren controversy ! He knew its barrenness, its frequent futility, and the weariness of soul which is the common meed of those who ' embark in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes.' ' But were it the meanest under-service, if God by His secretary Conscience enjoin it, it were sad for me if I should draw back.' Yet, though he thus resolved, he had a settled plan of campaign, as it might truly be called, for the struggle into which he had undertaken to enter. From the Church he turned to respond to an even broader appeal—that of Liberty. To Liberty he came forward to testify under all the chief aspects of national life—marriage, education, and freedom from tyranny of Church and State in the expression of thought. Freedom was here, as elsewhere, the cause for which Milton strove, and the love of which fired his zeal. In time he became the servant of the Commonwealth, and in his *Defence on Behalf of the English People*, as spokesman of both Government and nation, he defended by reason the truth which had been defended by arms. And the price he paid for rendering service to the English people was the loss of his sight. . . .

" *Paradise Lost* was in no sense the fruit of Milton's old age. When it was finished he was not yet sixty. The idea had been present to him from his youth ; all the general conditions of the work he had long since determined, and for it he had studied contemporary works on the same theme. The difficulty experienced by many worthy people in discriminating between what Milton found in the Bible and what he added of his own was a testimony

to the harmoniousness of the design on which the work was built. Milton's familiarity with the Bible was such that the whole range of ornament which lies in the beauty of biblical phraseology and the organ-tones of mere biblical nomenclature was at his command as it never had been at that of any writer before, and was certainly never likely to be again. But what was much more was that the initiated poet's intimacy with his theme, recast as it was by his own original genius, was such as to suggest the same kind of inspiration—the same kind, not the same degree—as that which spoke to men through the writers of the sacred books themselves. What was it in these labours of Milton that seemed chiefly to move us on the eve of the tercentenary of his birth to add to the wreaths laid upon his tomb by future generations? In the first instance, the gift which was his in so marvellous a measure that to no other English writer at least, in prose or verse, did it seem so distinctively to belong; the gift, too, which from the days of his youth onwards he had recognized as his, and which he had cultivated with religious assiduity, in sunshine and in shade, as the one talent which it is 'death to hide'—till in the evening of his days he returned it tenfold to the giver—the gift best defined by the one 'style.' The early poems showed that his masters and teachers had judged him aright, by striking that note of 'perfection' which implied the constant presence, the controlling influence, of the ideal. That gift had continued operative when he had exchanged poetry for prose. He followed, in different essays, different classical models, but the genius of Milton's style

was not one which could take its form from predecessors or rivals.

“The real secret of Milton’s style lay far deeper than any question as to the use made by him of the stories which lay open to him as a student. Even the gladiatorial passages in his prose at times suffered a sea-change and turned of a sudden into a thing of exquisite beauty and celestial loftiness—as when in the *Second Defence* he rose from trivial retorts upon More’s scurrility to dwell on the single topic of his blindness. Whence came this power of self-recovery? Many years before Milton began to write *Paradise Lost* he had in a single sentence unlocked the secret of the power supremely attested by that work and its sequel. ‘He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem.’ That elevation of soul was the motive force of Milton’s genius and the chief formative element in the growth and consummation of his style.”

The Times of December 9 printed in large type a poem by George Meredith written for the occasion, and if you want to see how far behind Milton in language, rhythm, dignity of expression and intelligible sense the so-called poets of to-day come panting on his track, you have only to read the poem if you can, but you will be able to judge if I give you the last twelve lines—

We need him now,
This latest Age in repetition cries:
For Belial, the adroit, is in our midst;
Mammon, more swoln to squeeze the slavish sweat
From hopeless toil: and overshadowingly
(Aggrandized, monstrous in his grinning mask
Of hypocritical Peace), inveterate Moloch
Remains the great example.

Homage to him
His debtor band, innumerable as waves
Running all golden from an eastern sun,
Joyfully render, in deep reverence
Subscribe, and as they speak their Milton's name,
Rays of his glory on their foreheads bear.

It will take the taste of sawdust out of our mouths perhaps if we read now Wordsworth's sonnet called *London 1802*.

Milton ! thou shouldst be living at this hour :
England hath need of thee : she is a fen
Of stagnant waters : Altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower
Have forfeited their ancient English Dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men ;
Oh ! raise us up, return to us again ;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, powers.
Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart :
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea,
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free.
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

Compare Meredith's polysyllables " overshadowingly," " aggrandized," " hypocritical " and " inveterate," all in three lines, with the simple monosyllabic purity of " Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart : Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea." That was written about a hundred years ago. But to show that we still have men who can write prose if not verse I will now quote you a part of the Leading Article in *The Times* of December 9 :—

" A famous passage in Johnson's *Life of Milton* begins with these words : ' Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked

his reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterranean current through fear and silence.' When this was written, about a century after Milton's death, fear and silence had long ceased. He was then esteemed the only English poet comparable in greatness to Shakespeare ; and now that we are celebrating the tercentenary of his birth he still holds the same rank, although in the interval many great poets have lived, although there has been a revolution in the theory and practice of poetry, and although his conception of the universe seems more strange and remote with every new addition made to human knowledge and experience. Milton himself seems strange and remote to us, not merely because he was born 300 years ago, but because he varied, far more than most great poets, from the kindly race of men. All his life he was travelling further and further away from sympathy with them. He was withdrawn, not only by his blindness, but by the action of his own mind, from that intercourse with his fellows by which the genius of Shakespeare must have been incessantly inspired and enriched. True, he was not a mere dreamer, but a man of affairs, the fierce partisan of the victors in the Civil War, and the servant of their great leader. It was certainly not timidity or inexperience that estranged him from the world, but rather the conviction, strengthened by experience, that he was unlike other men, and that he was right to be unlike them. He had little in common even with his own allies. He is often called the Puritan poet ; but, beyond a high disdain for incontinence and all vulgar pleasures, there was nothing Puritanic about him. The

author of *Comus* was writing as a Royalist for Royalists when he gave the world that best of all masks. He had no Puritan fear of delight or distrust of the senses ; and, though he was a republican and against all ritual in the worship of men, he excels in describing the pomp and ritual of Heaven. The difference between his poetry and the poetry of Anglicans like Herbert and Vaughan is the very opposite of what we should expect from their opinions. They try to set up a lonely and intimate relation between God and themselves and to tell secrets that are not to be overheard even by the Angels. But *his* imagination is content with the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory. He who questioned all earthly authority, was far less concerned to justify the ways of God to men than these lesser and more anxious poets. He had so despotic a mind that unconsciously he took the ways of God to be his own ways and condemned all who were against him as rebels against the Divine order. . . .

“ Milton, if he were alive now, would not ask for our love. He would demand that his nature should be judged by its fruits. As a poet, he would be content that we should not understand *him*, provided we understood his poetry. He lived to make poetry, and everything else that he did was mere by-play. Thus he passed through the angers of controversy unharmed to that business which he had chosen for himself in youth, when he had been inwardly prompted to ‘ leave something so written to aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die.’ Poetry to him was not a mere escape from reality, but the ordering and perfect-

ing of reality as if it were his own kingdom to make what he would of it.

“ His art was not impoverished by any distrust of beauty, nor made vague by any metaphysical misgivings. With all his ardour for perfection, he never tried to unthink the material substance of things, to imagine a delight not communicable through the senses, or a purpose in life beyond the comprehension of man. His mind was habitually occupied with ideas of the noblest kind of life possible to man ; and these he has expressed in clear unfaltering music, in poems of sure and lucid beauty.

“ We think of ideals as vague things and of ideal art as emptied of all character. But Milton’s ideals were drawn from life, from his own life, and whatever he represented that was contrary to them he drew from that lower life of the world which he saw clearly from his own eminence. . . .

“ Milton, even in his blindness, is scarcely pathetic, because he is above pity. The loss of sight was but a change of circumstance to him ; and no change of circumstance could touch that inner life which his spirit lived withdrawn from all the imperfections of this world. His firmness of purpose was hardly tested, indeed, by the triumph of his enemies, as well as by his own blindness ; but it endured all tests and triumphed over them in the song of his old age, when—

He, though blind of sight,
Despised, and thought extinguish’d quite,
With inward eyes illuminated,
His fiery virtue roused
From under ashes into sudden flame.

" *Samson Agonistes* seems to be something more than a work of art. It moves us, when we read it, like an heroic action, for it represents, not an ideal state of being, but what Milton had made of his own life. Through blindness and defeat he had attained to this, that without presumption or any violence to truth he could be the theme and hero of his own finest verse. Thus the great design of his life was accomplished, and thus he is remembered by posterity."

Milton read continuously but not for the sake of learning; he chose the best of all the literature of all the ages on which to form an ideal style, but it is hard to say which we most wonder at, Milton's immense erudition, or the sweetness of his exquisite early poems, or the vigour of his defence of freedom and liberty, or the patience with which, knowing his poetic calling, he could for twenty long years put it all aside to minister to his country's needs. As soon as he left the University he began to formulate what he proposed to himself as his life's task, the writing of some great dramatic or epic poem, which should be an ornament to the English language. On this he spent years of patient labour, and if we will take the trouble to study it, the greatest of all his attainments we shall unquestionably find to be his blank verse, of which he was so great a master that it was called by Hazlitt, "the only blank verse in the language, except Shakespeare's, that deserves the name of verse." The mere sound of his lines can sweep us along through the books of *Paradise Lost*. His very lists of the names of places fill us with a singular delight such as only Virgil can at all bestow. Listen to this—

From Arachosia, from Candaor East,
And Margiana, to the Hyrcanian cliffs
Of Caucasus, and dark Iberian dales :
From Atropatra and the neighbouring plains
Of Adiabene, Media, and the South
Of Susiana, to Balsuras haven.

What pomp and pageantry of sound ! Think of these lines—

Where the bright Seraphim in burning row
Their loud uplifted angel trumpets blow.

Can anything be grander ?

What makes him hard to enter into and perhaps frightens some people off from studying him as he deserves, is the fact noticed by the writer of the Milton Article in *The Times* Literary Supplement of December 3, that “ by the sheer force of intellect, imagination and purpose Milton imposed himself upon England, upon her thought, her character, her poetry,” a truly stupendous achievement. The writer goes on to say that, “ The familiar strength and sweetness of his lyric poems has never been compassed again ; and his blank verse in the form in which he uses it remains the finest utterance. It is to Milton’s poetry that men turn when they feel oppressed by the laxity and indifference of less strenuous times ; and even those who disagree with him find themselves caught up and swept away by the might and majesty of his soaring. Other poets we may love, before Milton we bow the head.”

In order to give some idea of the grandeur of Milton’s blank verse, the following selections were read at one of our meetings.

Paradise Lost.

I.	1-26.	344-371.
	157-191.	IV. 205-279.
	192-240.	598-609.
	241-282.	634-658.
	283-330.	V. 152-208.
	710-751.	893-904.
II.	666-726.	VI. 189-219.
III.	1-55.	VII. 1-39.
	213-265.	

The minor poems and *Samson Agonistes* were read on another occasion.

AN INTRODUCTION
TO
MILTON'S MASK "COMUS"

THE Drama which was handed down by Greece to Rome tended to decadence throughout the Roman period. The people of Rome loved comedy more than tragedy and comedy was of two kinds, "*Palliata*," which was in origin and style Greek, and used by Ennius, Plautus and Terence, and "*Togata*," which was native; and this, being fresher, survived longer than the other, but as it was also coarser in tone, it degenerated into buffoonery and scurrility and became a sort of pantomime in which dance and song and gesticulation by a single masked performer enchained the admiring crowd by suiting itself to the demands of a reckless and sensual age, and thus the stage eventually contributed as much to the demoralization of the Roman world as did the bloody spectacles in the amphitheatre and the maddening excitement of the chariot races.

The whole authority of the Christian Church was naturally against it; and when the faith of that Church became the acknowledged religion of the Roman Empire the doom of the theatre was sealed.

The attitude taken up by the Church towards the stage was unavoidable, and little did the Church

think that she would herself become the nursing mother of the new birth of an art which seemed then incapable of regeneration.

In the fourth century actors and mountebanks were excluded from the benefit of Christian Sacraments, but the profession was never quite suppressed, and the "Mimes" became a wandering fraternity. And we may here note that up to quite recent times "actors and vagrants" were always classed together in English law. These "Vagrom men," as Dogberry calls them, appeared at festivals, went through their performance, and then vanished into obscurity, handing down in this strange manner the traditions of the acting drama of pagan antiquity to the succeeding ages.

In the midst of this condemnation of the stage by the Christian Church, occasional Ecclesiastics wrote, for educational purposes, both tragic and comic plays. These include one attributed to St. Gregory Nazianzen called *The Passion of Christ* and written about the end of the fourth century A.D. More than five hundred years later, between the ninth and twelfth centuries, martyrdoms and miracles from the legends of the Christian saints formed the themes not infrequently of plays in both Germany and France which reached England after the Norman Conquest and formed what we call the Monastic Drama. Of this nature was *The Play of St. Katharine*, acted at Dunstable about 1100 "in copes" by the scholars of the Norman Geoffrey afterwards Abbot of St. Albans. All that we know of it is that when it was acted it was not regarded as a novelty.

But to go back :—In the fifth century, in order

to increase the attractions of public worship, on special occasions living pictures were introduced in the churches, illustrating the Gospel narrative, and accompanied by songs. These representations were not mere tableaux, action was allowed, and thus the Shepherds, the Innocents, and the scenes at the Holy Sepulchre and at the Resurrection were presented on festival days by the priests ; and then the epical part was added to the spectacular, the *Mystery Play* came into existence, certainly as early as the tenth century. These mysteries were written plays, but all in Latin, and in connexion at first with the Gospel of the day, but, going beyond the Gospel story, they became eventually divided into three classes according to their subject matter, and these were *Mysteries*, *Miracle Plays* and *Moralities*. *Mysteries* set forth Scriptural scenes only, and dealt with the mystery of the Redemption, Nativity, Passion and Resurrection. *Miracle Plays* were mostly concerned with the legends of the saints ; and *Moralities* illustrated Gospel truths *allegorically*, their characters being the personified virtues and vices. These last were the invention of the Norman Trouvères of whom we spoke when discussing the Arthurian legends.

Allegory had a singular attraction for people of that time, and these plays gradually came to be too well attended to be kept within the walls of a church, and were therefore acted outside, and, what was a still more important innovation, *in the vulgar tongue* ; and a comic element was introduced to suit the humour of the audience, each successive company of actors striving to make the well-

known comic characters more funny ; whence, as Herod was a stock comic figure, came the phrase "out-Heroding Herod."

In Cornwall you may still see some of the outdoor grassy amphitheatres in which Cornish *Miracle Plays* were performed in the native Cymric dialect. There is one at St. Just in North Cornwall not unlike the grassy circle at Eamont-bridge near Penrith in Cumberland, but smaller. Indeed, this larger circle is often said to have been an arena for knightly jousts and tournaments.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, City Trading Companies performed plays in several towns throughout England. We have the *Chester* and *Coventry* Plays and the *Towneley* Plays acted at Woodkirk near Wakefield in Yorkshire and others were given at Newcastle, York, Lancaster, Leeds, Kendal, Wymondham, Dublin and London in which last place the players were the parish clerks.

These plays were called after the company that exhibited them the "Glovers," or "Fishers" *pageants*, and were given on a high scaffold with two rooms one above the other open at the top and mounted on four wheels. In the lower room the actors dressed, and played in the upper one ; and after one "performance" the whole erection was wheeled to another street till all the main streets of a town had had their "pageant" as it was called. A Herald spoke the prologue and at times horsemen would ride up to the scaffold as part of the show, or Herod would be instructed to go and "rage in the street." This same Herod was always dressed as a Saracen, the demons wore

hideous heads, the souls were clad in black or white coats according to their kind, Divine or saintly personages wore gilt hair and beards, and the angels had gold skins and wings. "Hell mouth" was a pit at the side of the stage which occasionally displayed fire, and allowed the Demons entrance and exit.

Thus those City Company Plays exhibited the characteristics of both *Mysteries* and *Miracle Plays*, and also later of *Moralities*; and then, to lighten the allegories, the Devil and his attendant *Vice*, were introduced to provide the amusing element.

About the eleventh century the transition from the allegorical *Morality* to the *Regular Drama* was brought about by adding to the abstractions of Virtue and Vice some historical personages and types of real life; and about 1565 what were called *Interludes* were invented by John Heywood who was distinctly a man of genius. These were farcical scenes from real life, often, no doubt, coarse, but the occasional excessive grossness was due to an absence of refinement in all ranks of life rather than to any moral obliquity. Thus the allegorical plays were undermined, and the advent of comedy facilitated. But the *Moralities* and *Miracle Plays* survived right into the Elizabethan age, at which period the regular drama reached its highest point when, under Shakespeare, the stage "held the Mirror up to Nature" and delineated character of every kind. It was mainly in the generation which succeeded Shakespeare that the form of what is called the *Later Elizabethan Drama* rose and flourished. This had a twofold expression in what is

termed *The Pastoral Drama* and *The Mask*. The former was an exotic derived from the old classical poets of Greece and Sicily. But Ben Jonson by the fresh simplicity of his treatment, and Fletcher by the beauty of his poetic execution, managed to nationalize it, as far as so essentially foreign a growth could be made to flourish on English soil, and gave it a secure footing in the high places of English literature. The best specimens of the kind are Ben Jonson's unfinished work, "*The Sad Shepherd*" and "*The Youthful Shepherdess*" of Fletcher; both these are what we call pastoral plays.

The *Mask* was a more elastic composition, and embraced declamation, dialogue, music, dancing, and elaborate scenery and mechanical surprises which outdid the transformation scenes of the early or mid-Victorian pantomime. When there was least of literary effort in it and most of scenic ornament and device, the *Mask* closely resembled the pre-Shakespearian "pageant"; but when the literary part predominated, with distinct characters and fullness of action, it was more like the regular drama. The *Mask* was a frequent ornament of Queen Elizabeth's royal progresses, and was cultivated with such assiduity in the reign of James I that it quite outshone the attractions of the ordinary stage, and in the next reign, that of Charles I, Inigo Jones worked with such lavish splendour, designing scenic effects of so costly and complicated a kind, with gorgeous buildings, landscapes, and clouds or mountains which opened to display mimic deities, thrown into relief by coloured lights, that one *Mask* alone is said to have cost

£21,000. In these costly productions Ben Jonson received no more for his libretto, which was studded with beautiful lyrical gems, than did Inigo Jones for his scenic devices ; this so annoyed him that he satirized Inigo Jones and the latter left him and applied for libretto to Sir William Davenant and they collaborated at the production in 1634 of a Mask called *The Temple of Love*. Most of the Elizabethans contributed to this kind of play. But the richness and fullness of Ben Jonson's genius cannot be fully appreciated until you have read his Masks which hold a permanent place in English literature. He said that next himself only Fletcher and Chapman could write a Mask, and certainly he was by far the most successful in his time, but he lived long enough to see and acknowledge the poetic masterpiece of this species in Milton's *Comus*, after which it soon faded away in times too fierce to admit of its further cultivation. Had it not been for the civil wars the *Mask* was a form of such great and proved flexibility that it might well have been made more of, and as a fact it does reappear in later times merged in the Opera.

GRAY

1716-1771

THOMAS GRAY was born in Cornhill, December 26, 1716. His father was an Exchange broker, clever but extravagant, brutal in his treatment of his wife—and probably half insane ; he took no interest in his children and did nothing for Thomas, who alone out of a family of twelve lived beyond infancy. His mother was a Miss Dorothy Antrobus, who with her sister Mary kept a milliner's shop in the city, which was her only means of support as her husband, though wealthy, gave her nothing. Another sister, Anna, married a lawyer called Rogers. Two of her brothers were Eton Masters and Fellows of their Colleges, Robert of Peterhouse and Thomas of King's College. Robert had given the boy a home at Burnham near Slough where he taught him botany, and at the age of 11 he was sent to Eton, but Robert died when the boy was thirteen and Thomas then took charge of his education both at school and at College, the father declining to give his son any education whatever, and not even finding him in clothes ; so that the whole expense of his upbringing was borne by his mother, whose devotion was repaid by the life-long and passionate attachment of her son.

At Eton he formed lasting friendships with three boys, Horace Walpole, son of the Prime Minister, who was a year younger than Gray, Richard West, who was a few months older than Walpole and whose father became Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and Thomas Ashton. He had other boy friends but none so near his heart or of such close intimacy as Walpole and West. Walpole and Gray were both weakly children and took no part in any athletic exercises except that of swimming, a thing not so noticeable then as it would be now.

After seven years at Eton the friends separated, Ashton and Gray going in 1734 to Cambridge, Walpole to London for the winter before entering the University, and West to Oxford. Gray went first to Pembroke Hall and soon moved to Peterhouse as a pensioner. A Latin exercise of Gray's, written when he was an Eton boy, shows him to have been both a scholar and a thinker beyond his years, and as early as 1736 a letter to Walpole shows that feeling for the picturesque and love of Nature which was his great characteristic through life, and which he was absolutely the first to cultivate and set before others. His life at Cambridge and the prescribed studies were not to Gray's taste, and he left in 1738 without taking his degree. In 1739-41 he travelled in France and Italy with Walpole, who paid all expenses, and of his letters home the Poet Cowper, himself one of the best of letter-writers, says: "I once thought Swift's letters the best that could be written, but I like Gray's better." Five letters out of twenty-nine which are preserved of this period were addressed to his father, who died in November, 1741, two

months after Gray's return. In the following year his uncle, Mr, Rogers, died, and he and his mother and aunt went to live with Mrs. Rogers at Stoke Pogis near Eton. At the end of 1741 Gray began to write English poetry and produced a scene of the tragedy *Agrippina*; but 1742 was the great year for him. In that one year he wrote at Stoke Pogis his *Ode on the Spring, On a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, his *Sonnet on the Death of West*, and *The Hymn to Adversity*, and began his famous *Elegy*. Gray was now 26, but he did not publish any of these poems till he was 31. He had sent *Agrippina* to West for criticism and also early in June sent him the *Ode on the Spring*, but it was returned to him as West had died on the 1st of the month. This loss, and the death about the same time of his uncle, William Antrobus, greatly affected him and were the cause of the gloomy view he takes of life in his *Ode on Eton*, which, published in pamphlet form in 1747, was the first of his poems to appear in print, but without his name.

Next year this and the *Ode on the Spring* and *On the Death of a Favourite Cat* came out in Dodsley's Collection, also without the author's name.

After the productive summer at Stoke Pogis his flow of verse abruptly ceased, and he went back to Peterhouse and took his degree in 1744 as LL.B.; and for the rest of his life Cambridge was his home. He read hard for four or five years, chiefly at Greek History and Literature. Early in 1751 and in order to anticipate the editor of a magazine, Gray, through Walpole, got Dodsley to publish his *Elegy* which he had taken up again at Stoke Pogis on the death of his Aunt Mary in 1749, and finished in the

following year. It was published in a quarto pamphlet on February 16, 1751, entitled, *An Elegy Wrote in a Country Churchyard, price sixpence*. The poem, whose authorship was soon known, made him famous at once ; it soon reached an eleventh edition, and appeared in all magazines and collections and was translated into all languages, but the greatest tribute of all was paid to the *Elegy* in 1759 when Wolfe, silently floating down the St. Lawrence on September 13, the night before the battle on the Plains of Abraham, repeated most of the stanzas to the other officers in the boat, and at the end said, " Now, gentlemen, I would rather be the author of that poem than take Quebec."

In 1755 by Walpole's persuasion a handsome edition of his Poems was published with drawings by Richard Bentley ; modestly entitled by Gray. *Designs by Mr. R. Bentley for Six Poems by Mr. T. Gray*. The poems were the three already published in Dodsley's Collection in 1748, and also the *Hymn to Adversity*, *A Long Story*, written in 1750, and *The Elegy*.

In this edition Gray omitted " the redbreast stanza," which, charming as it is, does not seem to be wanted where it had originally stood, viz., after line 116 and just before the Epitaph. The stanza was as follows :—

There scattered oft, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen, are showers of violets found ;
The redbreast loves to build, and warble there,
And little footsteps lightly print the ground.

In the same month that the edition came out, March 1753, Gray's mother died. Gray's inscrip-

tion on the family tombstone at Stoke Pogis runs thus :—

“In the Vault beneath, are deposited, in hope of a joyful resurrection, the remains of Mary Antrobus. She died unmarried, Nov. 5, 1749, aged 66. In the same pious confidence, beside her friend and sister, here sleep the remains of Dorothy Gray, widow, the careful tender Mother of many children, one of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her. She died March 11, 1753, aged 67.

Neither his mother nor his aunts were ever aware that he wrote in verse, nor would he avow it to them, “lest they should burn me for a poet.”

In 1756 Gray re-migrated from Peterhouse to Pembroke. He was then in poor health and continued to be so until the end of his life. He died in College on July 30, 1771, in his 55th year. His poetry has been divided into three stages, first his early Odes which were written for his friends, secondly his *Elegy* which was written for Mankind, and finally his Pindaric Odes which were written for Poets.

The first of these Pindaric Odes, *The Progress of Poesy*, was completed in 1754, and sent to his friend Dr. Wharton with the remark, “If this be as tedious to you as it has grown to me I shall be sorry that I sent it to you.”

Next year he was at work on *The Bard*, which was not completed till 1757. Both these odes are on the pattern used by Pindar. They are divided into three parts of exactly the same length, and each part contains three divisions—a Strophè, an Antistrophè and an Epode.

Just as the death of his Aunt Mary caused him to take up again and complete his *Elegy*, which

was begun on the death of West, so the hearing of some concerts given by John Parry, the famous blind harper, set him going again with *The Bard* which had long hung fire. Horace Walpole persuaded Gray to allow the Pindaric Odes to be the first issue of the press he had set up at Strawberry Hill, and on June 29, 1757, Gray received from Dodsley forty guineas, which was the only money he ever made by literature. They were printed on large quarto and entitled Odes by Mr. Gray *φωναντα συνετοις*, which means "a voice to those who have ears to hear." This publication put Gray at the head at once of the living English poets.

And we may here pause to consider who the living poets were. Pope and Swift were older than Gray, and Goldsmith and Cowper were younger, and though Goldsmith reviewed the Pindaric Odes he had not yet published anything himself. His actual contemporaries were Young, author of the *Night Thoughts*, Thomson, author of *The Castle of Indolence*, Dr. Johnson, who had published his *London* in 1738, and Collins who had six months before Gray had published anything written his famous Odes in 1747. There was not enough stirring in the literary atmosphere to keep a poet going, and as has been aptly said, "The Wells of Poetry were stagnant and there was no Angel to strike the waters."

On Colley Cibber's death, in the year 1757, the laureateship was offered to Gray and refused, and was then accepted by Whitehead.

Subsequently, in 1768, the Chair of Modern History and Modern Languages was offered to him

by the Duke of Grafton, then Prime Minister, and accepted. It was worth £400 a year; the professor was recommended always to find a delegate to do the foreign languages, and no one until after his time had ever given a lecture on Modern History. Gray was glad of the salary, though since the death of his mother he had never been in need. In Jan. 1768, Gray, who was always haunted by the fear of fire, was saved from a conflagration in Pembroke Hall.

The next year there appeared the first complete edition of such poems as he wished to publish; they were ten in number, the six previously published, omitting the *Long Story*, and the two Pindaric Odes and three others of which *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin* were translated by him from the Icelandic, and *The Triumphs of Owen* was adapted from the Welsh. And he writes—"With all this I am but a shrimp of an author." In the following year he wrote the Installation Ode on the appointment of the Duke of Grafton as Chancellor of the University. His love of Nature already alluded to and his discernment of the beauties of natural scenery, at that time quite a new study, led him to make tours in many parts of England; and the descriptions he gives of his tour in the Lakes in the year 1769 are not easily surpassed. He also travelled in Scotland and in Wales, and wrote excellent letters on what he saw. Then he not only had an eye for beauty and grandeur of scenery, but he had a naturalist's keen observation for the habits of birds and the appearance of wild flowers, and, being a student of architecture, he made a tour

among the fine churches of the Fens and drew up a catalogue of the antiquities of England and Wales.

Of his letter-writing we have heard Cowper's testimony, and we find in his remarks on Elizabethan poetry that he was a writer of no mean order in the days when criticism was at a very low point. He knew French and Icelandic and Italian, and as a student of music he worked hard when he went with Walpole to Italy, making a large collection of MS. music ; and at the same time he studied painting, sculpture and architecture, of which he was probably the first modern student. Gosse says " his mind was at this time the most actively acquisitive of any in Europe." But in spite of his many interests, all his life, partly no doubt owing to feebleness of health, he was subject to melancholy. He writes thus about it to West,—“ Low spirits are my true and faithful companions ; they get up with me, go to bed with me, make journeys and returns as I do ; nay and pay visits and will even affect to be jocose, and force a feeble laugh with me ; but most commonly we sit together, and are the prettiest insipid company in the world. However, when you come I believe they must undergo the fate of all humble companions, and be discarded.” With these habits of mind and this feebleness of health Gray was a middle-aged man at 25 and took up at that age the quiet life of a resident in College rooms at Cambridge and there he “ kept the noiseless tenor of his way ” for the rest of his natural existence.

In spite of this tendency to melancholy we find in his letters a lively wit and a sense of humour which make them delightful reading, and this

trait must have been constantly in evidence and have contributed to his almost magnetic power of attracting and retaining the friendship of so many excellent people. In "A Sketch of the Character of the Celebrated Poet, Mr. Gray," contributed to the *London Magazine* by Mr. Temple who, when Fellow of Trinity Hall, had known Gray at Cambridge, we find the following : " Perhaps Mr. Gray was the most learned man in Europe : he was equally acquainted with the elegant and profound parts of Science, and not superficially but thoroughly. He knew every branch of history, both Natural and Civil ; had read all the original historians of England, France and Italy ; and was a great antiquarian. Criticism, metaphysics, morals, politics made a principal part of his plan of study. Voyages and travels of all sorts were his favourite amusements : and he had a fine taste in painting, prints, architecture and gardening. With such a fund of knowledge his conversation must have been equally instructive and entertaining. But he was also a good man, a well bred man, a man of virtue and humanity." He omits to notice his taste and skill in music, and he adds that " Though he seemed to value others chiefly according to the progress they had made in knowledge, yet he could not bear to be considered himself merely as a man of letters : and though without birth or fortune or station, his desire was to be looked upon as a private gentleman who read for his amusement." Another writer, himself an eminent scholar, also speaks of him as " perhaps the most learned man of the age " and, after alluding to his agreeable conversation says " superior

knowledge, an exquisite taste in the fine arts, and above all purity of morals and an unaffected reverence for religion, made him an ornament to society and an honour to human nature."

The desire to be thought a gentleman to whom literature was an amusement rather than a profession may account for the desultory manner of his composition, with its fits of passing inspiration severed by long periods of poetical inactivity. In fact he so constantly broke off in the middle of a poem that when some years after its commencement he finished his *Elegy* and sent it to Horace Walpole he wrote with it, "Having put an end to a thing whose beginning you have seen long ago I immediately send it to you. You will, I hope, look upon it in the light of a thing with an end to it : a merit that most of my writings have wanted and are like to want."

But whatever the mode of the composition the results are of the very highest order. Mr. Gosse points out that in his *Ode on Adversity*, now usually styled a hymn, "He first shows that stateliness of movement and pomp of allegorical illustration which give an individuality to his mature style." This mature style is seen in his Pindaric Odes and in the famous *Elegy*. In this the use of the Heroic quatrain with alternate rhymes, in which Gray so excels all others, was not his invention. Gray knew it well as used by Sir John Davies in his poem *Nosce teipsum* (know thyself) printed in 1599, and he was evidently familiar with a quatrain of West's—

Ah me ! what boots us all our boasted power,
Our golden treasures and our purple state !

They cannot ward the inevitable hour,
Nor stay the fearful violence of fate.

But what others had used Gray made entirely his own, and no poem was produced between the days of Milton and Wordsworth which has enjoyed so high a reputation in literature as *Gray's Elegy*. Its fame is worldwide and always fresh. "It possesses," says Mr. Gosse, "the charm of incomparable felicity, of a melody that is not too subtle to charm every ear, of a moral persuasiveness that appeals to every generation, and of metrical skill that in each line proclaims the Master. The Elegy may be looked upon as the typical piece of English verse, our poem of poems; not that it is the most brilliant or original or profound lyric of our language, but because it combines in more balanced perfection than any other all the qualities that go to the production of a fine poetical effect."¹

Mr. Swinburne, who infinitely preferred Collins to Gray as a lyric poet, has felt impelled by "the high perfection of the poem, and its universal appeal to the tenderest and noblest depths of human feeling," to admit that "as an elegiac poet Gray holds for all ages to come his unassailable and sovereign station." Like all the plays of Shakespeare and like so much of Tennyson, the Elegy is "thickly studded with phrases that have become part and parcel of colloquial speech." In the eyes of scholars its classical phrases and forms add to its charm, for just as no traveller had brought so much learning and cultivation to bear on all that he saw since Milton, so, like Milton,

¹ Gray in the *English Men of Letters* series, by Edmund Gosse.

he was imbued with the classics, and wrote a good deal of elegant Latin verse. Indeed his longest work is a Latin poem, and his Latin Alcaics on the Grande Chartreuse are famous.

Gray himself considered, and no doubt rightly, his Pindaric Ode on *The Progress of Poesy* to be a better piece of work than the Elegy. But the latter appeals to a wider circle of admirers; one can only wish that we had more of either kind. As it is, Gray, who said himself that "the style he aimed at was extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical,"—a very proper aim for all writers of poetry—may truly be said to have reached his aim, and the only thing which prevents his name being placed amongst the greatest English poets is that he wrote so little, which is accounted for by the fact that, though a born poet he fell upon an age of prose. Much of that little is unsurpassed, but that we should possess a considerable bulk or volume of writing is, as Matthew Arnold points out, a *sine qua non*, if we are going to place a poet quite in the front rank, and of this Gray was himself fully aware when he said, "After all I am but a shrimp of an author."

BURNS

1759-1796

BURNS was and is better known and loved by his compatriots than any English poet ever was—and a striking instance of this was furnished when the navvies were digging the trench from Thirlmere through the Lake District for the Manchester Water Works, for the Scotchmen on the works all seemed to be able to quote Burns, and with delight, though they knew nothing of the great Lake Poet Wordsworth. But for all this, to most English people he is comparatively unknown, and this is, I think, owing to two causes. One that it is generally understood that he lived an irregular life, which is reflected in his writing, and the other that some of his writing is so Scotch that it needs a glossary. But to take these objections in order. There is very much in his life which is of supreme interest ; indeed to follow his life and the growth of his genius is far more stirring than to read the biography of any other poet you can mention, with the possible exception of Keats, and as for the Scotch, it is not as a rule at all hard to follow, the greater part being plain English. In estimating a man's place on the roll of poets, as Matthew Arnold insists in his essay on Wordsworth's poems, the mere bulk of his writing must be duly considered, and though Charles

Wolfe is for ever to be remembered, for the one solitary poem on *The Burial of Sir John Moore* and Blanco White for his great sonnet on Night, it requires a body of poetry to place a man in the first rank. Now Burns, besides his poems, wrote some 300 songs, and many of them of such beauty that Tennyson declared that they must make their author immortal; and more than one of those whose opinion is worth taking on the subject have placed his songs so high that Shakespeare alone is considered to have surpassed them in lyrical beauty. If this is true, or anything like the truth, it is indeed no credit to English lovers of verse that they do not know the songs of Burns better; for once known there can be no doubt as to the unanimous verdict about their merits.

He had a genius for melody, and taking the ordinary subjects of everyday life among the Scottish peasantry, and using the homely peasant speech, he turned out song after song of the very highest quality.

Principal Shairp, in the opening sentence of his life of Burns, says: "Great men, great events, great epochs, it has been said, grow as we recede from them; and the rate at which they grow in the estimation of men is in some sort a measure of their greatness. Tried by this standard, Burns must be great indeed, for during the eighty years that have passed since his death, men's interest in the man himself and their estimate of his genius have been steadily increasing, and each decade since he died has produced at least two biographies of him."

"What," he goes on to ask, "has caused this

interest in him and his verse ? Not success in life, for his was, in all but his poetry, a defeated life, and one most sad to contemplate. Perhaps the very fact that so much failure and shipwreck were combined with such splendid gifts has attracted to him a deep and compassionate interest." In this opinion I think we must all agree, especially as the gifts are attested by such stirring, such tender, such memorable poetry.

His father was a Scottish peasant who raised himself to the rank of tenant farmer. He was a truly splendid character ; hard-working, wise, religious, but irascible often to his own hurt. He gave his sons an exceptionally good education and they read many useful books, among which those which Burns set most store by were the lives of Hannibal and of Wallace and a book of letters, by distinguished writers, and—most precious of all—a selection of English songs. This was his constant companion by hedgerow and highway, and had much to do with forming his taste in the line which has made him so famous.

His first beginnings both of love and poetry were made in his fifteenth year, 1774, when he wrote the song, *My handsome Nell* to the blacksmith's daughter, Nelly Kilpatrick, who, according to Scotch custom, was his partner in the harvest field ; and henceforth his love for the lasses and for making songs about them were his distinguishing characteristics for the rest of his life.

His religious upbringing got a shake when he left home to learn mensuration at Kirkoswald School, where he first mingled in drunken brawls and learnt a freedom of life and conversation pre-

viously unknown to him. This evil was carried further when he went to the little seaport of Irvine to learn flax-dressing, for here he mixed with companions of loose morals, and he thenceforward was apt to give free rein to his strong sensual passions ; causing him often, though he knew and praised the better, to do and delight in the worse. Meantime his genius grew and we find him described as a man of " large intelligence, noble aspirations and ill-regulated passions." This singular admixture caused what Professor Shairp calls the contradiction between the noble gifts he had and the actual life he lived, which makes his career the painful tragedy that it was. For he had, we are told, " a noble nature, endowments of head and heart beyond any of his time, wide ranging sympathies, intellectual force of the strongest man, sensibility as of the tenderest woman, a keen sense of right and wrong which he had brought from a pure home, with a strong independence of spirit ; and over against these high gifts a lower nature fierce and turbulent, filling him with wild passions which were hard to restrain and fatal to indulge, and between these two opposing natures a weak and irresolute will, which could overhear the voice of conscience, but had no strength to obey it. . . . From earliest manhood till the close, flesh and spirit were waging within him interminable war, and who shall say which had the victory ? "

With all this against him, to what shall we attribute his wonderful success as a song-maker, which has given him such pre-eminence among the lyric poets of the world that for power and beauty

and simplicity of diction Shakespeare alone excels him ?

Doubtless he gives us himself the right clue when he attributes much to his home and his having been well brought up under his father's eye, a father who took the most intelligent interest in his sons' lessons and who "took pains," says his brother Gilbert, "to converse with us familiarly as if we had been men." Much also he attributes to the awakening of fancy in him by the songs and tales of enchantment told to him constantly by an old nurse. To this we must add the remarkable selection of books which he read in his early days. These gave him the food on which his genius expanded, and his ploughing and field work on his father's farm of seventy acres, though hard, was healthy work, and we know that often, as he turned the furrow, he was thinking out his verses. Witness those well-known poems on *The Daisy*, *The Fieldmouse* and *The Wounded Hare*.

Living thus an outdoor life in a beautiful country, he drew his inspiration direct from Nature. It was William Pitt who, soon after the poet's death, is reported to have said at Lord Liverpool's table—

"I can think of no verse since Shakespeare's that has so much the appearance of coming sweetly from Nature."

But beyond all these predisposing conditions, there was the Divine fire within him. At all times he seemed to write from inspiration; and sometimes his subject dominated him as if it were some irresistible spirit.

I think nothing confirms this better than the

plain account his wife gives of the way in which his most celebrated poem, *Tam O' Shanter*, was composed in 1790. It was the work of one day. He had spent most of the time by the river side, for he generally composed out of doors, and in the afternoon Mrs. Burns joined him with the children. But seeing that he was busy "crooning to himself," she loitered with the little ones among the broom. Presently she saw him wildly gesticulating, and reciting very loud the lines he had just made.

"I wish ye had seen him," she said; "he was in such ecstasy that the tears were happing down his cheeks."

Sir Egerton Brydges records making a call on him and how "the fire sparkled in his eye and how the torrent of his conversation flowed till midnight." "I don't deny," he says, "that he said some absurd things and many coarse ones. . . . His pride and perhaps his vanity were even morbid. His great beauty was his manly strength, and his energy and elevation of thought and feeling. He had always a full mind, and all flowed from a genuine spring. I never conversed with a man who appeared to be more warmly impressed with the beauties of Nature; and visions of female beauty and tenderness seemed to transport him. He did not merely appear to be a poet at casual intervals, but at every moment a poetical enthusiasm seemed to beat in his veins."

He was renowned both in taverns and drawing-rooms for his great powers of conversation, which led, as in the case of a later poet, Hartley Coleridge, to his company being eagerly sought at all convivial

meetings, and tended, such was the fashion of the times, to over-deep drinking and much heart-broken but ineffectual repentance. For he was by no means an irreligious man, was a most affectionate husband and took great pains to bring up his son well ; but his passions were too strong for his will and he played himself false, in spite of all his knowledge and high principles, so that he is a life-long instance of absolute and fatal inconsistency.

So much for the Poet ; now to say something of what he did for Scotland. One of the great merits of his verse is that it is so *direct and truthful*. He is direct even to coarseness at times, but always absolutely truthful in all that he depicts. And another great merit is that he is *simple and clear*. To this must be added what many may not quite understand the full value of at first, viz. that he wrote in the language of those among whom he lived. At times he gave way to the growing desire which animated most people of education just then in Scotland to write in pure English, and he has written some few good poems in English. The *Lament of Mary Queen of Scots* is one of these, beginning—

Now Nature hangs her mantle green,

and another, the *Lament for James Earl of Glencairn*, is of the same kind. It begins—

The wind blew hollow frae the hills,

and concludes with the beautiful stanza—

The Bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen ;
The Monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been ;

The Mother may forget the child
 That smiles sae sweetly on her knee ;
 But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
 And a' that thou hast done for me.

These are not entirely free from Scotch words, but nearly so, and they are both good, which is not always the case where he abandons the Scotch. But *The Wounded Hare* is purely English.

But of course Burns wrote not only for his own class and country, his thoughts and sympathies are often for all mankind, and such lines as—

O wad some Power the giftie gie us
 To see oursels as ithers see us ;
 It wad frae mony a blunder free us
 An' foolish notion :

are spoken to the universal human heart. Still it was to his own country that he more immediately addressed himself, and his two great gifts to Scotland were first his setting plainly forth the dignity of the Scotch "tongue," and, secondly, what may seem strange to those who are accustomed to object to Burns, and not without reason, that his verse is coarse, his elevating the tone of Scotch Songs to a purity which before had been sadly lacking. "His stream of song contains some sediment," says Professor Shairp, "we could wish away, yet as a whole, how vividly, clearly, sunnily it flows ; how far the good preponderates over the evil."

That Burns wrote so much in the Scotch vernacular is to many a Southron a stumblingblock. But see what it meant ; to quote Shairp again, "Here was a man, a son of toil, looking out on the world from his cottage, with the clearest eye, the

most piercing insight and the warmest heart ; touching life at a hundred points, seeing to the core all the sterling worth, nor less all the pretence and hollowness of the men he met, the humour, the drollery, the pathos and the sorrow of human existence ; and expressing what he saw, not in the stock phrases of books, but in his own vernacular, the language of his fireside, with a directness, a force, a vitality that tingled to the finger tips and forced the phrases of his peasant dialect into literature and made them classical. Large sympathy, generous enthusiasm, reckless abandonment, fierce indignation, melting compassion, rare flashes of moral insight, all are there.

“ Thus he interpreted with amazing truthfulness the lives, thoughts, feelings and manners of the Scottish peasantry to whom he belonged as they had never been interpreted before and never can be again. . . . No wonder they loved him as perhaps never poet was loved before or since.”

But he worked not only on the peasant mind.

“ A race of literary men had sprung up in Edinburgh who were Scotchmen in nothing but their dwelling-place. The thing they most dreaded was to be convicted of a Scotticism. To them enter Burns, who with the instinct of genius chose for his subject that Scottish life which they ignored, and for his vehicle that vernacular which they despised, and who, touching the springs of long forgotten emotions, brought back on the hearts of his countrymen a tide of patriotic feeling to which they had long been strangers. The tide which Burns turned, Scott carried to full flood ; and to those two writers it is due that Scotchmen of to-day love

and cherish their country with a pride unknown to their ancestors of the previous century."

The second gift he made to his country of purifying the stream of song which already flowed in considerable volume was a gift which redounds greatly to his honour. It was his plan to take the old tunes and fit new words to them. He wrote hundreds, and among them there are some we could wish he never had written, but one who knows the subject tells us that we who inherit Scottish song as he left it can hardly imagine how much he did to purify and elevate these national melodies. To see what he has done we have but to compare Burns' songs with the collection published in 1769, when he was a boy of ten. These old Scotch melodies have been described as "sweet and strong and all the more for their strength and sweetness they were a moral plague, from the indecent words to which many of them had long been set. How was the plague to be stayed? all the preachers in the land could not divorce the grossness from the music. The only way was to put something better in its stead; this inestimable something better Burns gave us, and as the songs thus purified appeal to all ranks and ages in every clime they form Burns' most enduring claim on the whole world's gratitude." When we realize this, we attach less value to the objection to Burns' poetry that it is coarse.

There are at least twenty biographies of Burns, so I will give you the merest outline of his life here.

Robert Burns was born near Ayr on January 25, 1759. It was in a poor cottage that did not well keep out the wintry wind, and in the last year

but one of George III, as he tells us himself in the song called *Robin*—

Our Monarch's hindmost year but ane
Was five-and-twenty days begun,
'Twas then a blast o' Januar win'
Blew hansel ¹ in on Robin.

He lived with his parents and brothers and sisters, and as soon as he was old enough he worked, as did his brother Gilbert, on the farm, first at Mount Oliphant, then at Lochlea, and later at Mossgiel, whence he sometimes signed his letters, etc., "Rob Mossgiel" after the fashion of the Highland lairds, and where in 1784 his father died. Between 1783 and 1786 he had written enough for a volume, which was printed at Kilmarnock and produced him £20. Things had gone wrong with him; the farm had not paid, and he was prevented by her father from marrying the girl of his choice, and he was about to sail for Jamaica and take up some book-keeping work in an office on the sugar plantations, but the bringing out of a new edition of his poems at Edinburgh stayed him. He went thither and was received with open arms by the best families and returned with a huge reputation and received after some delay the sum of £500 from the publisher.

He was in Edinburgh again next winter, 1787, but he did not find such a welcome as he had done in 1786, which was greatly his own fault.

In 1788 he took a farm called Ellisland in Nithsdale near Dumfries and married his old love Jean Armour. He did not get settled in his new farm-

¹ A 'hansel' is a New Year's gift.

house till 1789, but for the next two years he lived there and wrote some of his best songs there ; then, as the farm did not pay, he got appointed Excise officer for the district ; this brought him £50 a year with provision for widow and orphans. He now had to ride 200 miles a week on Excise business, and the farm and the poetry equally suffered. In 1791 he migrated to Dumfries, where he could do the Excise work without a horse, and from his life here his character seems to have deteriorated and his health to have suffered, till in 1796 he was quite broken in health as in spirits. He went to Brow, a little place near Ruthwell, on the Solway, to try what sea bathing would do, and it is there we have the touching little story of his visit to the Manse at Ruthwell, when the minister's daughter was about to pull down the blind lest the sun might be too much for him, but he turned on her those wonderful large dark eyes which Sir Walter Scott when a lad of 15 was so struck by, and which he says literally *glowed* with poetic feeling, and said to her, " Thank you, my dear, for your kind attention, but oh, let him shine : he will not shine long for me." A day or two later he returned to Dumfries and within a week, on July 21, 1796, at the age of 37, he died, and " the news sounded through all Scotland like a knell announcing a national bereavement."

And now to say something of his works. Burns wrote a good many letters of which the long and famous letter to Dr. Moore, written on his first visit to Edinburgh, gives a graphic account of his life up to that point, and is the basis of all his biographies.

His poetical writings are divided into *Poems*, *Epistles* and *Songs*.

Many of the Epistles are full of humour and they are mostly very Scotch, one to *Hugh Parker*, describing "Jenny Geddes," his old brown mare, shows the kindliness of his nature ; and the *Epistle to a Young Friend* has the lines—

But Och ! mankind are unco weak,
And little to be trusted ;
If Self the wavering balance shake
It's rarely right adjusted ;

and ends with—

Yet ne'er with wits profane to range
Be complaisance extended ;
An atheist's laugh's a poor exchange
For Deity offended.

Of the poems, beside the immortal *Tam O' Shanter*, the most famous are *Death and Dr. Hornbook*, *Holy Willie's Prayer*, *Halloween*, with its beautiful description of the burn—

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As through the glen it wimpl't ;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays ;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't ;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle ;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazel.

The Holy Fair and *The Jolly Beggars*, a Cantata, perhaps the cleverest thing he ever wrote, *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, in which he describes exactly his father's home and mode of life, *The Twa Dogs*, *The Brigs of Ayr* and *The Vision*.

The poem *To a Mouse* turned up and *To a*

Mountain Daisy turned down by his plough are known to all.

The poem *To a Mouse*, after the lines—

Thou saw the fields laid bare and waste,
And weary winter comin' fast,
And cosie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till, crash! the cruel coulter past
Out through thy cell,—

ends pathetically with—

But Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best-laid schemes o' mice and men
Gang aft a-gley.
And lea'e us nought but grief and pain
For promised joy.

Still thou art blest, compared wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my ee
On prospects drear!
And forward, though I canna see,
I guess and fear.

In his poem *Man was Made to Mourn* are the lines—

And Man, whose heaven-erected face
The smiles of love adorn,
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn!

a sentiment re-echoed, you will remember, in Wordsworth's lines—

Have I not reason to lament
What Man has made of Man?

In the same way, take Coleridge's lines in *The Ancient Mariner*—

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee thou wedding guest!
He prayeth well that loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best who loveth best
 All things both great and small ;
 For the dear God who loveth us
 He made and loveth all.

This is but an illustration of what Burns wrote twelve years before, at the conclusion of his poem *A Winter Night*.

But deep this truth impressed my mind—
 Through all his works abroad,
 The heart benevolent and kind
 The most resembles God.

The Lament of Mary Queen of Scots on the approach of Spring has this beautiful concluding stanza—

Oh soon to me may *summer* suns
 Nae mair light up the morn !
 Nae mair to me the *autumn* winds
 Wave o'er the yellow corn !
 And in the narrow house of death
 Let *winter* round me rave ;
 And the next flowers that deck the *spring*
 Bloom on my peaceful grave !

The grand lines at the end of *The Lament for James Earl of Glencairn*, "The bridegroom may forget the bride," etc., have been already quoted (p. 73) as also have the famous lines from the poem *To a Louse* which, though not apparently a very promising subject, enshrines one of his best known stanzas—

Oh wad some Power the giftie gie us
 To see oursels as ithers see us !

The Address to the Unco guid, a protest against judging our neighbours, begins—

O ye who are sae guid yoursel,
 Sae pious and sae holy,
 Ye've nought to do but mark and tell
 Your neighbour's fauts and folly!

* * *

Think, when your castigated pulse
 Gies now and then a wallop,
 What ragings must his veins convulse,
 That still eternal gallop.

The concluding stanzas of this poem are of Burns' very best—

Then gently scan your brother man,
 Still gentler sister woman;
 Though they have gone a kennin' wrang,
 To step aside is human:
 One point must still be greatly dark,
 The moving *why* they do it:
 And just as lamely can ye mark
 How far perhaps they rue it.
 Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
 Decidedly can try us;
 He knows each chord—its various tone
 Each spring—its various bias:
 Then at the balance let's be mute,
 We never can adjust it;
 What's done we partly may compute,
 But know not what's resisted.

We conclude our notice of the Poems with *A Bard's Epitaph*, Burns' epitaph for himself, which Wordsworth called "a sincere and solemn avowal" . . . "A confession at once devout, poetical and human." We must read the whole of this. It is written in his favourite metre of 8 and 4.

Is there a whim-inspired fool,
 Owre just for thought, owre hot for rule,
 Owre blate¹ to seek, owre proud to snool²
 Let him draw near:
 And owre this grassy heap sing dool,³
 And drap a tear.

¹ Bashful.

² Be obsequious.

³ Lamentation.

Is there a bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this area throng ?

Oh pass not by !
But, with a frater-feeling strong,
Here heave a sigh.

Is there a man whose judgment clear
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs himself life's mad career
Wild as the wave ?
Here pause—and, through the starting tear
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn, and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame ;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stained his name !

Reader, attend—whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
In low pursuit ;
Know, prudent cautious self-control
Is wisdom's root.

There is something pathetic about these two poems, in which we see his own life's experience, and seem to catch the genuine outpourings of a broken and a contrite heart.

It is worth noting that, with the exception of the *Laments for Glencairn* and of *Mary Queen of Scots* and *Tam O' Shanter*, which were later, and *The Death and Dying Words of poor Maillie*, his pet sheep, which was earlier—a poem full of gentle humour composed one afternoon as he followed the plough—all that we have picked out for quotation or reference were composed in the two years 1785 and 1786 at Mossgiel. He turned out on an average five poems a week in those wonderful

years when he was 27 and 28 years old. Most of his Songs were written after this time and in the last decade of his life.

They were nearly all written for the volumes of *The Musical Museum*, brought out by Johnson, an Edinburgh engraver, or later for a Collection of Scottish Melodies published by Thomson of Edinburgh. To these Collections Burns contributed over 300 songs and refused to take any payment.

They are of four kinds, *Domestic*, *Bacchanalian*, *War*, or *Love* Songs, the latter far the most numerous.

For the DOMESTIC a fine example is that which begins—

Is there for honest poverty,

Tune : For a' that and a' that—

a poem breathing the most manly independence. Perhaps the most familiar specimen is *John Anderson my Jo*. Another *Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair* is noteworthy as being a personal sketch of the poet. For Burns, writing to thank Thomson for a picture of *The Cottar's Saturday Night* says : “ I have some thoughts of suggesting to you to prefix a vignette of me to my song ‘ Contented wi' little and cantie wi' mair ’ in order that the portrait of my face and the picture of my mind may go down the stream of time together.”

For BACCHANALIAN SONGS we may take—

Oh, Willie brew'd a peck o' maut.

The famous *John Barleycorn* is one of his improvements on an old English song.

Of WAR SONGS the first of all is the noble patriotic song—

Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,

Bruce's address to his Army at Bannockburn. This rings with the trumpet notes of liberty and was in Carlyle's opinion the best war ode ever penned.

Another good patriotic song is *The Dumfries Volunteers*, written on the formation of the Corps in 1795. It begins—

Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?

It would be difficult to find a marching song with a more lively beat in it than *Ye Jacobites by name*, and *Macpherson's Farewell* is a fine song of the sword. It is founded on a song made by Macpherson himself when in prison and played by him on his violin at the gallows hill of Banff just before his execution in 1700. Burns was moved to write this by being shown the huge sword of the gigantic freebooter in Duff Castle.

In all these subjects Burns made his mark, but in none is he so absolutely pre-eminent as in his LOVE SONGS. Burns addressed, and in his verse made ardent love to, every lass he saw, and there is no mistaking the ardour of his address. It made no difference whether it was a farm servant or the sister of his host in some baronial hall or highland castle. He clasped them all equally to his bosom and apparently believed himself sincere. The feeling may have been at times artificial or transitory, but the sweetness and melody of the verse is always real and imperishable. Tennyson

bears testimony to this. "Read," he said, "the exquisite Songs of Burns, each as perfect as a berry and radiant as a dewdrop. There never was an immortal poet if he be not one."

The songs are nearly all Scotch, and all beautifully musical, and all set to the old well-known tunes.

The song *To Mary in Heaven*, is notable as being the only good *Song* in English, and it went to the tune of "The Death of Captain Cook." The story of Mary Campbell is this. She belonged to the neighbourhood of Dunoon, a beautiful watering-place on the Clyde, and was in the service of Colonel Montgomery of Coilsfield when the poet made her acquaintance, and afterwards in that of Gavin Hamilton. They would appear to have been seriously attached to each other. When Jean Armour's father had ordered her to relinquish all claims on the poet, his thoughts naturally turned to Mary Campbell. It was arranged that Mary should give up her place with the view of making preparations for their union; but before she went home they met in a sequestered spot on the banks of the Ayr. Standing on either side of a purling brook, and holding a Bible between them, they exchanged vows of eternal fidelity. Mary presented him with her Bible, the poet giving his own in exchange. This Bible has been preserved, and on a blank leaf, in the poet's handwriting, is inscribed, "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely: I am the Lord" (Lev. xix. 12). In the second volume, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oath" (Matt. v. 33). And on another blank leaf his name

and mark as a Royal Arch Mason. The lovers never met again, Mary Campbell having died suddenly at Greenock of scarlet fever, caught in nursing her brother. Over her grave a monument has been erected by the admirers of the poet. On the third anniversary of her death, Jean Armour, then his wife, noticed that, towards the evening, "he grew sad about something, and went into the barn-yard, where he strode restlessly up and down for some time, although repeatedly asked to come in. Immediately on entering the house he sat down and wrote *To Mary in Heaven*, which Lockhart characterizes "as the noblest of all his ballads."

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
That lovest to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

That sacred hour can I forget,
Can I forget the hallow'd grove,
Where by the winding Ayr we met,
To live one day of parting love!
Eternity will not efface
Those records dear of transports past;
Thy image at our last embrace;
Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!

Ayr, gurgling, kiss'd his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild woods' thick'ning green;
The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,
Twined amorous round the raptured scene;
The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
The birds sang love on every spray—
Till too, too soon, the glowing west
Proclaim'd the speed of winged day.

Still o'er these scenes my memory wakes,
 And fondly broods with miser care!
 Time but the impression stronger makes,
 As streams their channels deeper wear.
 My Mary! dear departed shade!
 Where is thy place of blissful rest?
 See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
 Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

But no song, whether in English or Scotch, quite comes up to his lines to another Mary.

MY BONNY MARY.

Tune: "Go fetch to me a pint o' wine."
 Go fetch to me a pint o' wine,
 And fill it in a silver tassie,
 That I may drink, before I go,
 A service to my bonny lassie;
 The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith;
 Fu' loud the wind blaws frae the ferry;
 The ship rides by the Berwick-law,
 And I maun leave my bonny Mary.
 The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
 The glittering spears are ranked ready;
 The shouts o' war are heard afar,
 The battle closes thick and bloody;
 But it's not the roar o' sea or shore
 Wad make me langer wish to tarry;
 Nor shout o' war that's heard afar—
 It's leaving thee, my bonny Mary.

For the last stanza Tennyson had a great admiration, and, as he rolled the lines out, they had a ring about them which truly stirred the blood.

SONGS SELECTED FOR READING.

My Handsome Nell (Nellie Kilpatrick or Kirkbride ?)
 The blacksmith's daughter. His first partner in
 the harvest field.

Mary Morison.—Probably = Ellison Begbie, a far-

mer's daughter, to whom he wrote " On Cessnock Banks a Lassie dwells."

" *O Mary, at thy Window be.*" His first great Lyric.

" *Green grow the rashes o !*" New words to an old tune.

The Banks of Doon.

" Ye flowery banks o' bonny Doon."

" *Of a' the airts the wind can blaw*" (composed during his honeymoon).

"*Oh, were I on Parnassus hill !*"

Auld Lang Syne.

" Should auld acquaintance be forgot " (second and third verses by R. B.).

My Bonny Mary.

" Go, fetch to me a pint o' wine " (first four lines from an old Ballad).

The Winter is past.

" The Winter is past and the Summer's come at last."

To Mary in Heaven. (Mary Campbell, called also Highland Mary.)

" Thou ling'ring star with less'ning ray."

The Blue-eyed Lassie.

" I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen " (Miss Jean Jeffrey).

Tibbie Dunbar.

" Oh, wilt thou go wi' me, sweet Tibbie Dunbar?"

Tam Glen.

" My heart is a-breaking, dear Tittie."

It is na Jean thy bonny face (= Jean Armour).

(Originally written in English by another hand.)

The Bonny Wee Thing. (Miss Davies.)

" Boony wee thing, cannie wee thing."

The first and fifth of the six Songs to Clarinda (Mrs. Maclehose).

Ae fond Kiss.

" Ae fond kiss and then we sever."

My Nannie's awa. (Gone to join her ne'er-dowell husband in Jamaica.)

"Now in her green mantle."

Bonny Lesley.

"Oh, saw ye bonny Lesley?" (Miss Lesley Baillie).

What can a young Lassie do?

Oh for ane and twenty Tam.

"And oh for, etc."

Oh, Luve will venture in.

Highland Mary.

"Ye banks and braes and streams around."

Had I a Cave. (On the jilting of his friend Allan Cunningham.)

Oh, Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad.

Oh, were my love yon lilac fair. (The first two stanzas only by R.B., prefixed to an old song.)

The lovely Lass of Inverness. (Imitation of old Ballad composition.)

A red, red Rose. (An improved version of an old song.)

"Oh, my luve's like a red, red rose."

These last three seem to illustrate the three methods Burns made use of in his treatment of old song.

Ca the yowes.

"Ca the yowes to the knowes." (Improved for Thomson from the Museum Version.)

Chloris. (Miss Jean Lorimer, to whom he wrote 11 songs.)

"My Chloris mark how green the groves."

How long and dreary is the night. (Improved Version.)
Tune.—"Cauld Kail in Aberdeen."

Coming through the Rye.

"Coming through the rye, poor body."

Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast. (This was addressed

to Miss Jessie Lewars, who nursed him in his last illness.)

Burns wrote the words to fit a favourite air of hers which she played to him. The words begin—

The Robin cam to the Wren's nest
And keekit in, and keekit in ;
Oh, weel's me on your auld pow,
Wad ye be in, wad ye be in ?

The tune was "The Lass of Livingstone." Upon hearing the air, Burns sat down and after a few minutes' abstraction, produced the following—

Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee :
Or did Misfortune's bitter storms
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy bield should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'.

Or were I in the wildest waste,
Sae bleak and bare, sae bleak and bare,
The desert were a paradise,
If thou wert there, if thou wert there :
Or were I monarch o' the globe
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my crown
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

The song has been charmingly set to music by Mendelssohn. It was one of Burns' last compositions. Seven years after his death Wordsworth and his sister visited Dumfries and wrote his poem, "At the Grave of Burns." On the following day they walked by the banks of Frith near the poet's residence and the thoughts then and there suggested were embodied in a poem many years later, in which we find the following—

Through busiest street and loneliest glen
Are felt the flashes of his pen ;
He rules mid Winter snows, and when
 Bees fill their hives
Deep in the general heart of men
 His power survives.

S. T. COLERIDGE

1772-1834

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, who was born October 21, 1772, two and a half years after W. Wordsworth, and died in 1834, aged 62, was not only a poet but a philosopher, a writer on politics, morals, religion and art, a critic quite of the first order, and a most remarkable talker. He had many aims in common with his great contemporary W. Wordsworth, and yet "though the two were friends, and shared together many mental sympathies, between the lives and characters of the philosophic poet and the poetic philosopher there was more of contrast than of likeness. The one, robust and whole in body as in mind, resolute in will, and single in purpose, knowing little of books and of other men's thoughts, and caring less for them, set himself, with his own unaided resources, to work out the great original vein of poetry that was within him, and stopped not, nor turned aside, till he had fulfilled his task, had enriched English literature with a new poetry of the deepest and purest ore, and thereby made the world for ever his debtor. The other,—master of an ampler and more varied though not richer field, of quicker sympathies, less self-sustained, but touching life and thought at more numerous points, eager to know all that

other men had thought and known, and working as well on a basis of wide erudition as on his own internal resources, but with a body that did him grievous wrong, that, far from obeying, frustrated his better aspirations, and a will faltering and irresolute to follow out the behests of his surpassing intellect,—only drove in a shaft here and there into the vast mine of thought that was in him, and died leaving samples rather of what he might have done, than any full and rounded achievement,—yet samples so rich, so varied, so suggestive, that to thousands they have been the quickeners of new intellectual life, and to this day they stand unequalled by anything his country has since produced. In one point, however, the friends are alike. They both turned aside from professional aims, devoted themselves to pure thought, set themselves to counter-work the mechanical and utilitarian bias of their time, and became the great spiritualizers of the thought of their countrymen, the fountain-heads from which has flowed most of what is high and unworldly and elevating in the thinking and speculation of the succeeding age.”¹ Thus in spite of its immense promise Coleridge’s is a disappointing life and the picture of transcendent genius united to irregular impulses and infirmity of will is a mournful one, while his own recognition of his failure and his penitential regrets lend a tragic pathos to his story which touches our common nature more closely than any gifts of genius.

Born at his father’s Vicarage of Ottery St. Mary, in Devon, he was the uncle of *Sir John Taylor Cole-*

¹ *Poetry and Philosophy*, by Principal Shairp.

ridge, the Judge and the great friend of Dr. Arnold, whose son *John Duke Coleridge* became the Lord Chief Justice of England, and died 1894.

In 1781, at the age of nine, he was at the Blue-coat School, under Dr. Bowyer, together with Charles Lamb, and there he had a very hard time, being both friendless and ill-fed.

On whole holidays, which to a boy who had no friends to go to were a trial rather than a pleasure, he used to go for bathing excursions to the New River ; and, swimming across once in his clothes and letting them dry on his back, he laid the seeds of those rheumatic pains and that prolonged bodily suffering which never afterwards left him, and did so much to frustrate the large promise of his youth.

Shairp tells us that in the lower school of Christ's, the time was spent in idleness and little was learnt. But even then Coleridge was a devourer of books and this appetite was fed by a strange accident, which, though often told, must here be repeated once again. One day as the lower schoolboy walked down the Strand, going with his arms as if in the act of swimming, he touched the pocket of a passer-by. "What, so young and so wicked!" exclaimed the stranger, at the same time seizing the boy for a pickpocket. "I am not a pickpocket; I only thought I was Leander swimming the Hellespont." The capturer, who must have been a man of some feeling, was so struck with the answer, and with the intelligence as well as simplicity of the boy, that instead of handing him over to the police, he subscribed to a library, that Coleridge might get thence in future his fill of books.

In a short time he read right through the catalogue and exhausted the library.

He was now advanced in Latin and Greek and devoured old-world medical works and books on metaphysics. The first book of poems by which he was really attracted was a volume of *Sonnets and Early Poems* by W. L. Bowles, and this set him writing poetry himself.

At school Coleridge had befriended a junior boy called Evans, who was afterwards a clerk in the India House with C. Lamb, and he made acquaintance with Mrs. Evans and her three daughters and, as he says, "Of course I fell in love with the eldest, Mary." He was now sixteen, and for the next three years he saw a good deal of the Evans family and wrote to them all indiscriminately from Cambridge. Mrs. Evans was quite like a mother or aunt to him.

Cottle says that Coleridge told him that a fit of disgust at the rejection of his addresses by Mary Evans made him run away from Cambridge ; but he still talked of being deeply in love with her after he left Cambridge finally which caused Southey to wonder that he should engage himself to Sarah Fricker. Even after this the sight of Mary passing with one of her sisters when he was looking out of an inn window at Wrexham stirred his heart deeply, and made him realize that he had been too precipitate in his engagement, and he wrote at this time the poem called at first *To My Own Heart* but later on named *On a Discovery Made too Late*, and on December 24, 1794, he writes an impassioned letter to Mary, ending with the words "May God infinitely love you ! S. T. Coleridge."

When he first knew the Evanses he wrote many verses to Mary, e.g. *A Wish*, *An Ode After Anacreon*, *A Lover's Complaint*, and *Ninathoma*. Mrs. Bigg-Wither, Mary's great niece, possesses a good portrait by Sir W. Beechey, P.R.A., of "Mary" as a pretty fresh-coloured girl with a very pleasing expression. She married Mr. F. Todd, and we hear no more of her family, though Coleridge never forgot their kindness to him when a "Grecian."

In 1790 he was still at school, though often ill for half of the term, and there he wrote his first Monody on the Death of Chatterton, which he expanded in 1829, nearly forty years later.

In 1791 he went up to Jesus College, Cambridge, just after W. Wordsworth had left Cambridge. He won the prize for a Greek Sapphic Ode, but for all that his scholarship was not very good.

Before he had spent two years at Cambridge his debts, aided perhaps by disappointed love, drove him to enlist. He was now of age and seeing a notice that recruits were wanted for the 15th Light Dragoons he said, "Well, I've hated all my life soldiers and horses, and the sooner I cure myself of that the better." He enlisted as Private Silas Titus Cumberback (S.T.C.), in reference to which name he wrote: "My habits were so little equestrian that my horse, I doubt not, was of that opinion."

After four months of misery his discharge was procured. He returned to Cambridge, but left without taking a degree. His Captain read a Latin inscription which he had written on the white wall of the cavalry stable at Reading, "*Eheu quam infortunii Miserrimum est fuisse felicem*,"

which is an echo of the old Sophoclean sentiment "That a sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things."

In 1794 he visited Oxford, and became acquainted with Robert Southey, with whom he toured in Wales. Their friendship was lifelong; and Southey—who in industry and rectitude of conduct was as far *above* Coleridge as he was *below* him in genius—was for many long years a sort of guardian to him and a father to his family.

The French Revolution, with its promise of Liberty and Equality, regeneration and virtue, had taken a firm hold on Southey, Coleridge and Wordsworth, who were all deeply stirred by it at first, and Coleridge now opened out to Southey a plan for founding a community in America on the Susquehanna, "where," according to Principal Shairp, "a band of brothers, cultivated and pure-minded, were to have all things in common, and selfishness was to be unknown. The common land was to be tilled by the common toil of the men; the wives (for all were to be married) were to perform all household duties; and abundant leisure was to remain over for social intercourse, or to pursue literature, or in more pensive moods

Soothed sadly by the dirgeful wind,
Muse on the sore ills they had left behind.

The banks of the Susquehanna were to be this earthly paradise, chosen more for the melody of the name than for any ascertained advantages. Indeed, they hardly seemed to have known exactly where their paradise lay." Southey soon left Balliol, and the two friends went to Bristol, Sou-

they's native town, there to prepare for carrying out the Pantisocratic dream. Such visions have not only been dreamed since then, but acted on by enthusiastic youths, and the result leaves no reason to regret that the project of Coleridge and Southey never got further than being a dream. Want of money was, as usual, the immediate cause of the failure ; everything else had been provided for, but when it came to the point it was found that neither the two leaders, nor any of the other friends who had embarked in the scheme, had money enough to pay their passage to America. Southey was the first to see how matters stood and to recant. At this Coleridge was greatly disgusted, and gave vent to his disappointment in no measured language. The scheme was abandoned early in 1795, and the two young poets, having been for some time in love with two sisters of a Bristol family were married, Coleridge in October of that year to Sarah Fricker, and Southey six weeks later to her sister Edith, and both lived for a time at Bristol.

Coleridge's next enterprise was the publication of a weekly miscellany called *The Watchman*, in the Spring of 1796. The contents were to range over nearly the same subjects as those now discussed in the best weeklies, and the aim was to be, as announced in the motto, " that all may know the truth, and that the truth may make us free." But powerful as he would have been as a contributor Coleridge was not the man to conduct such an undertaking, least of all to do so single-handed. The most notable thing about *The Watchman* was the tour he made through the midland county towns with a flaming prospectus, " Knowledge is

power," to try the political atmosphere. It was during this tour that Coleridge encountered at Birmingham the Calvinist tallow-chandler, whom he describes with hair like candle-wicks, and face pinguinitescent, for it was a melting day with him. We are told that after Coleridge had harangued the man of dips for half an hour, and run through every note in the whole gamut of eloquence, now reasoning, now declaiming, now indignant, now pathetic, on the state of the world as it is, compared with what it should be ; at the first pause in the harangue the tallow-chandler interposed :—" And what might the cost be ? " " Only *fourpence*—only *fourpence*, sir, each number." " That comes to a deal of money at the end of a year ; and how much did you say there was to be for the money ? " " Thirty-two pages, sir ! large octavo, closely printed." " Thirty and two pages ? Bless me ! Except what I does in a family way on the Sabbath, that's more than I ever reads, sir, all the year round. I am as great a one as any man in Brummagem, sir ! for liberty and truth, and all that sort of things, but as to this (no offence, I hope, sir) I must beg to be excused."

In the same year his son Hartley was born, and named after the philosopher whom Coleridge then regarded as the wisest of mankind. In addition to his journalism he also preached in Unitarian chapels on political subjects, and sometimes with success, his first two sermons being on the Corn Laws and the Hairpowder Tax ; but two years later the two brothers Wedgwood endowed him with £150 a year which the survivor most handsomely continued to pay when one of the

brothers died, on condition that he should forsake the pulpit and take to literature. He had been writing poetry for some time, and in 1797 his friend Cottle of Bristol gave him 30 guineas for the copyright and published his first volume entitled *Poems on Various Subjects* by S. T. Coleridge, late of Jesus Coll. Cambridge. Eloquence and enthusiasm came to him naturally but all his views were still in process of formation, so that in his *Ode on the Departing Year* he prophesies the destruction of England of whom he says: "the Nations curse thee," but in the second edition of his poems which came out in the following year he changes the line—

O doomed to fall, enslaved and vile,
to

Not yet enslaved not wholly vile,
O Albion! O my mother isle!

The poem appeared originally in a newspaper, and was not included in the first edition. The volume contains a very fine poem called *Religious Musings*, of which Charles Lamb, who contributed two sonnets to the volume, writes—

"I am reading your *Religious Musings* this day, and I sincerely think it the noblest poem in the language next after *Paradise Lost*. The author calls it a desultory poem written on the Christmas Eve of 1794, and it begins thus—

This is the time, when most divine to hear,
The voice of adoration rouses me,
As with a cherub's trump: and high upborne,
Yea, mingling with the choir, I seem to view
The vision of the heavenly multitude,
Who hymned the song of peace o'er Bethlehem's fields!

Yet thou more bright than all the angel-blaze,
 That harbingered thy birth, Thou man of woes !
 Despised Galilaean ! For the great
 Invisible (by symbols only seen)
 With a peculiar and surpassing light
 Shines from the visage of the oppressed good man,
 When heedless of himself the scourged saint
 Mourns for the oppressor. Fair the vernal mead,
 Fair the high grove, the sea, the sun, the stars ;
 True impress each of their creating Sire !
 Yet nor high grove, nor many-colour'd mead,
 Nor the green ocean with his thousand isles,
 Nor the starred azure, nor the sovran sun,
 E'er with such majesty of portraiture
 Imaged the supreme beauty uncreate,
 As Thou, meek Saviour ! at the fearful hour
 When thy insulted anguish winged the prayer
 Harped by archangels, when they sing of mercy !
 Which when the Almighty heard from forth his throne
 Diviner light filled heaven with ecstasy !
 Heaven's hymnings paused : and hell her yawning mouth
 Closed a brief moment.

Later occur a dozen lines beginning " There is one mind," of which Lamb said, " these lines are without a rival in the whole compass of my poetic reading."

He had another good friend, Mr. Poole of Nether Stowey, on the Quantock Hills, who helped him in every way, and placed a cottage at his disposal to which he went accompanied by Charles Lloyd who, together with Lamb, contributed to the second edition of the *Poems on Various Subjects*. Here he spent the two great years of his life, rich in production, and during which almost all his good poetic work was done. These years were 1797 and 1798, when he was 25 and 26.

William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy were then at *Racedown*, in Dorset, where Coleridge went to see them, and the Wordsworths were so

taken with him that they came to *Nether Stowey* in Somersetshire and spent a fortnight with him, after which they moved to *Alfoxden* on purpose to be near him.

“ The occasion of their making a joint literary venture was curious. Coleridge, Wordsworth, and his sister wished to make a short walking tour, for which five pounds were needed, but were not forthcoming. To supply this want they agreed to make a joint-poem, and send it to some magazine which would give the required sum. Accordingly, one evening as they trudged along the Quantock Hills, they planned *The Ancient Mariner*, founded on a dream which a friend of Coleridge had dreamed. Coleridge supplied most of the incidents, and almost all the lines. Wordsworth contributed the incident of the shooting of the albatross, with a line here and there. *The Ancient Mariner* soon grew, till it was beyond the desired five pounds’ worth, so they thought of a joint volume. Coleridge was to take supernatural objects, or romantic, and invest them with a human interest and resemblance of truth. Wordsworth was to take common every-day incidents, and by faithful adherence to nature, with true but modifying colours of imagination, was to shed over common aspects of earth and facts of life such a charm as light and shade, sunset and moonlight, shed over a familiar landscape. Wordsworth was so much more the industrious of the two, that he had completed enough for a volume when Coleridge had only finished *The Ancient Mariner*, and begun *Christabel* and *The Dark Ladie*. Cottle was summoned from Bristol to arrange for publication, and he has left a gossip-

ing but amusing account of his intercourse with the two poets at this time, and his visit to Alfoxden. He agreed to give Wordsworth £30 for the twenty-two pieces of his which made up the first volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*, while for 'The Rime of the Ancient Marinere,' which was to head the volume, he made a separate bargain with Coleridge. This volume, which appeared in the autumn of 1798, was the first which made Wordsworth known to the world as a poet." Wordsworth has himself left an account of this in his prefatory note to the poem *We are Seven*.

Cottle has also left an amusing account of his visit. He took Wordsworth in his gig from Bristol to Alfoxden, picking up Coleridge at Nether Stowey. They had brought the viands for their dinner with them in the gig: a loaf, a stout piece of cheese, and a bottle of brandy. As they neared their landing-place, a beggar, whom they helped with some pence, returned their kindness by helping himself to the cheese from the back of the gig. Arrived at the place Coleridge unyoked the horse, dashed down the gig-shafts with a jerk that rolled the brandy-bottle from the seat, and broke it to pieces before their eyes. Then Cottle set to unharnessing the horse, but could not get off the collar. Wordsworth next essayed it, with no better success. At last Coleridge came to the charge, and worked away with such violence that he nearly thraved the poor horse's head off. He too was forced to desist, with a protest that "the horse's head must have grown since the collar was put on." While the two poets and their publisher were standing thus nonplussed, the servant-girl happened to pass

through the stable-yard, and seeing their perplexity, exclaimed, "La, master, you don't go about the work the right way; you should do it like this." So saying, she turned the collar upside down, and slipped it off in a trice. Then came the dinner, "a superb brown loaf, a dish of lettuces, and, instead of the brandy, a jug of pure water."

Mr. Stopford Brooke speaks of this period thus: "Wordsworth and Coleridge had then a lot Divine; they lived together in a beautiful part of Somerset, where the soft orchard and cottage scenery ran up into the slopes of blue hills, with meadowy hollows and remote dells and lucent streams and wind-entangled woods. They walked all day, chanting their rimes in gay or moralizing mood, cheering each other and cheered, their hopes, their aspirations and their joys the same. Their minds in difference chimed together; each awoke the best in each; and both were rapt by the ineffable joy of healthy youth. Then when the passion of shaping imaginations came upon them, all the world of Nature and her beauty and all the world of humanity and its tenderness took up abode in their souls and desired to be upon their lips."

That Summer, under whose indulgent skies,
Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her sylvan combes,
Thou in bewitching words with happy heart
Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man
The Bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
Didst utter of the Lady Christabel;
And I associate with such labour steeped
In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours.

The Prelude, Book xiv., "Conclusion."

Out of this the *Lyrical Ballads* were born. The volume began with *The Ancient Mariner*, Coleridge's first great achievement.

In his later poems, *Dejection*, etc., the workings of his own soul supplied him with materials. "But the over personal kills the power of song, and the Love of metaphysical, scientific, political and theological problems produces no poetry at all and dries up its source; and when Coleridge knew what poetry was he ceased to write on these problems."

How much the Wordsworths thought of Coleridge is plain to the readers of Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals. She speaks of "putting aside dearest Coleridge's letters," and another entry runs thus: "Every sight and sound reminds me of Coleridge, dear, dear fellow, of his many talks to us, by day and night, of all dear things. I was melancholy and could not talk, but at last I eased my heart by weeping. . . . Oh! how many, many reasons have I to be anxious for him," and *The Prelude* was addressed to Coleridge, or in Wordsworth's own words, "To a dear friend most distinguished for his knowledge and genius and to whom the author's intellect is deeply indebted." He addresses him at the end of nearly every Book, and says in one place that he is quite content—

if thou my honoured friend!
Who in these thoughts art ever at my side
Support, as heretofore, my fainting steps.

Prelude, Book iii.

And that passage quoted just above beginning—

That Summer under whose indulgent skies
Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved—

ends thus—

When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts
And hast before thee all which then we were,
To thee, in memory of that happiness,
It will be known, by thee at least, my friend !
Felt, that the history of a poet's mind
Is labour not unworthy of regard ;
To thee the work shall justify itself.

The close friendship begun at Nether Stowey was continued at Grasmere. One of the most delightful memories of Dove Cottage is that of an evening when Wordsworth, Dorothy and Coleridge together read Spenser's *Epithalamion* in that little upstairs room.

At Nether Stowey Coleridge had visits from Charles Lamb, whom he addresses in his poem *The lime tree bower my prison* is as "my gentle-hearted Charles," also from Charles Lloyd, John Thelwall, Humphrey Davy and William Hazlitt : and it is an interesting thing that the house he lived in is now acquired for the nation, as Dove Cottage in Grasmere has been. It is at this period that we have Hazlitt's description of him.

"He is the only person I ever knew who answered to my idea of a man of genius. He is the only person from whom I ever learned anything. There is only one thing he might have learned from me in return, but *that* he has not. He was the first poet I ever knew. His genius at that time had angelic wings, and fed on manna. He talked on for ever ; and you wished him to talk on for ever. His thoughts did not seem to come with labour and effort ; but as if borne on the gusts of genius, and as if the wings of imagination lifted him off his

feet. His voice rolled on the ear like a pealing organ, and its sound alone was the music of thought. His mind was clothed with wings ; and, raised on them, he lifted philosophy to heaven. In his descriptions, you then saw the progress of human happiness and liberty in bright and never-ending succession, like the steps of Jacob's ladder, with airy shapes ascending and descending. And shall I who heard him then, listen to him now ? Not I ! That spell is broke ; that time is gone for ever ; that voice is heard no more : but still the recollection comes rushing by, with thoughts of long-past years, and rings in my ears with never dying sound."

With the money produced by their joint book he went abroad to Hamburg with the Wordsworths, and thence by himself to Göttingen where he studied German, and on his return in 1800 he translated Schiller's *Wallenstein* and also wrote a good deal for the *Morning Post* and afterwards for the *Courier*, contributing political articles and also poems regularly for about six months at the rate of two or three a week ; and this he continued at intervals for a couple of years.

In a letter to Mr. Poole, dated March 1800, he informs his friend that if he " had the least love of money " he could " make sure of £2,000 a year, for that Stuart had offered him half shares in his two papers, the *Morning Post* and the *Courier*, if he would devote himself to them in conjunction with their proprietor. But I told him," he continues, " that I would not give up the country and the lazy reading of old folios for two thousand times two thousand pounds—in short, that beyond

£350 a year I considered money as a real evil." Startlingly liberal as this offer will appear, it seems really to have been made. For, writing long afterwards to Mr. Nelson Coleridge, Mr. Stuart says: "Could Coleridge and I place ourselves thirty years back, and he be so far a man of business as to write three or four hours a day, there is nothing I would not pay for his assistance. I would take him into partnership, and I would enable him to make a large fortune."

In 1800 he went to Dove Cottage in Grasmere to see the Wordsworths and thence to Keswick. Whilst the Wordsworths occupied Dove Cottage, or Townend as they then called it, Coleridge was constantly in the habit of walking over, coming by road, or over the hills and dropping on them in all weathers and at any hour of the day or night. Wordsworth says—

Full many a time upon a stormy night
His voice came to us from the neighbouring height ;
Oft could we see him driving full in view
At midday when the sun was shining bright.

In 1801, he established himself in a home, afterwards Southey's House, called Greta Hall, close to where the River Greta runs into Derwentwater. Here his son Derwent was born, and here he wrote the second part of *Christabel*, introducing in Part II names and local colouring from the Lake District. Late in life he wrote: "Of my poetic work I would fain finish *Christabel*"; and Mr. Gillman has given us the scheme he had in his mind for its conclusion (see *English Men of Letters*, p. 58). His health at this time was bad and his pains

were such that he had recourse to the first doses of the drug which had so fatal an effect on all his future. "Between his arrival at Keswick in the summer of 1800 and his departure for Malta in the spring of 1804 that fatal change of constitution, temperament and habits which governed the whole of his subsequent history had fully established itself. Between these two dates he was transformed from the Coleridge of whom his young fellow-students in Germany have left us so pleasing a picture into the Coleridge whom distressed kinsmen, alienated friends, and a disappointed public were to have before them for the remainder of his days." So speaks Mr. Trail in his *English Men of Letters* volume, and again, "It is quite consistent with probability, and only accords with Coleridge's own express affirmations, to believe that it was the medicinal efficacy of opium, and this quality of it alone, which induced him to resort to it again and again until his senses contracted that well-known and insatiable craving for the peculiar excitement, 'voluptuous' only to the initiated, which opium-intoxication creates." But let Coleridge speak on this point for himself. Writing in April 1826, he says :—

"I wrote a few stanzas three-and-twenty years ago, soon after my eyes had been opened to the true nature of the habit into which I had been ignorantly deluded by the seeming magic effects of opium in the sudden removal of a supposed rheumatic affection, attended with swellings in my knees and palpitation of the heart and pains all over me, by which I had been bed-ridden for nearly six months. Unhappily among my neighbours' and landlord's

books were a large number of medical reviews and magazines. I had always a fondness (a common case, but a most mischievous one with reading men who are at all dyspeptic) for dabbling in medical writings ; and in one of these reviews I met a case which I fancied very like my own, in which a cure had been effected by the ' Kendal Black Drop.' In an evil hour I procured it : it worked miracles—the swellings disappeared, the pains vanished. I was all alive, and all around me being as ignorant as myself, nothing could exceed my triumph. I talked of nothing else, prescribed the newly-discovered panacea for all complaints, and carried a little about with me not to lose any opportunity of administering ' instant relief and speedy cure ' to all complainers, stranger or friend, gentle or simple. Alas ! it is with a bitter smile, a laugh of gall and bitterness, that I recall this period of unsuspecting delusion, and how I first became aware of the Maelstrom, the fatal whirlpool to which I was drawing, just when the current was beyond my strength to stem. The state of my mind is truly portrayed in the following effusion,¹ for God knows ! that from that time I was the victim of pain and terror, nor had I at any time taken the flattering poison as a stimulus or for any craving after pleasurable sensation."

Next to 1797, his most productive year seems to have been 1802, in which he wrote *Dejection*, the *Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni*—written by the way in Keswick and not even from memory, for Coleridge never visited Cha-

¹ I.e., *Ode to Dejection*, 1802, which came out in the *Morning Post* on October 4. W. W.'s wedding day.

mounix, but the poem is an enlargement of some German stanzas by Frederic Brun. The poem is overwrought, but it contains some grand Miltonic lines.

Ye Ice-falls ! ye that from the mountain's brow
 Adown enormous ravines slope amain ;
 Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice,
 And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge !
 Motionless torrents ! silent cataracts !
 Who made you glorious as the gates of heaven
 Beneath the keen full moon ? Who bade the sun
 Clothe you with rainbows ? Who, with living flowers
 Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet ?
 God ! let the torrents, like a shout of nations,
 Answer ! and let the ice-plains echo, God !
 God ! sing ye meadow-streams with gladsome voice !
 Ye pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds !
 And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,
 And in their perilous fall shall thunder, God !

Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal frost !
 Ye wild goats sporting round the eagle's nest !
 Ye eagles, playmates of the mountain-storm !
 Ye lightnings, the dread arrows of the clouds !
 Ye signs and wonders of the element !
 Utter forth God, and fill the hills with praise !

The same year saw *The Inscription for a Fountain, The Good Great Man*, ending with—

Greatness and goodness are not *means*, but *ends*.
 Hath he not always treasures, always friends,
 The good great man ? *Three* treasures, LOVE, and LIGHT,
 And CALM THOUGHTS, regular as infant's breath :
 And three firm friends, more sure than day and night,
 HIMSELF, his MAKER, and the ANGEL DEATH !
Morning Post, Sept. 23, 1802.

And the *Answer to a Child's Question*—

Do you ask what the birds say ? The sparrow, the dove,
 The linnet and thrush say, " I love and I love ! "
 In the winter they're silent, the wind is so strong ;
 What it says, I don't know, but it sings a loud song.

But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,
And singing, and loving, all come back together.
"I love, and I love," almost all the birds say
From sunrise to star-rise, so gladsome are they!
But the lark is so brimful of gladness and love,
That he sings, and he sings; and for ever sings he,
"I love my love, and my love loves me!"
'Tis no wonder that he's full of joy to the brim,
When he loves his love, and his love loves him!

After this he wrote no more great poetry, but as he ceased writing he became a prodigious talker.

In 1802 his daughter Sara was born, and he planned the *Bibliotheca Britannica*, which was to have been a "History of British Literature, bibliographical, biographical, and critical," in eight volumes. The first volume was to contain a "complete history of all Welsh, Saxon, and Erse books that are not translations, but the native growth of Britain"; to accomplish which, writes Coleridge to Southey, "I will with great pleasure join you in learning Welsh and Erse." The second volume was to contain the history of English poetry and poets, including "all prose truly poetical." The third volume "English prose, considered as to style, as to eloquence, as to general impressiveness; a history of styles and manners, their causes, their birthplace and parentage, their analysis." The fourth volume would take up "the history of metaphysics, theology, medicine, alchemy; common, canon, and Roman law from Alfred to Henry VII." The fifth would "carry on metaphysics and ethics to the present day in the first half, and comprise in the second half the theology of all the reformers." In the sixth and seventh volumes were to be included "all the

articles you (Southey) can get on all the separate arts and sciences that have been treated of in books since the Reformation ; and by this time," concludes the enthusiastic projector, " the book, if it answered at all, would have gained so high a reputation that you need not fear having whom you liked to write the different articles—medicine, surgery, chemistry, etc. ; navigation, travellers' voyages, etc., etc." " There is certainly," says Trail, " a melancholy humour in the formulation of so portentous a scheme by a man who was at this moment wandering aimlessly among the lakes and mountains, unable to settle down to any definite piece of literary work, or even to throw off a fatal habit, which could not fail, if persevered in, to destroy all power of steady application in the future."

It was in this year, too, that he met Byron whom he thus describes :—" If you had seen Lord Byron you could scarcely disbelieve him. So beautiful a countenance I scarcely ever saw ; his teeth so many stationary smiles ; his eyes the open portals of the sun—things of light, and made for light ; and his forehead, so ample, and yet so flexible, passing from marble smoothness into a hundred wreaths and lines and dimples, correspondent to the feelings and sentiments he is uttering."

After a tour with the Wordsworths in Scotland he went abroad in 1804, and did some Secretary work at Malta for Sir Alexander Ball, the Governor. It was to Malta that Wordsworth sent him the MS. of *The Prelude*. Thence he went to Naples and Rome, and came back in 1806 in very low spirits. He was estranged from his wife, and

writes that he has returned to his native country, "ill, penniless, and worse than homeless." He was now engaged on a series of Lectures at the Royal Institution on "Taste," and later on Poetry and the fine arts. People flocked to hear him, but he was frequently too ill or too careless to attend and lecture.

In 1809 he lived for four months with the Wordsworths at *Allan Bank*, Grasmere, and issued twenty-seven weekly numbers of *The Friend*, the object of which was to teach men how to think on politics, religion and morals. It was something like *The Spectator*, but more prolix and with less variety, and so it never became popular. For the next four years he was frequently lecturing and in 1814 he tried a course on Shakespeare and Milton at Bristol, but again he frequently disappointed his audience and the reason is plainly indicated in the following sad picture by his publisher Cottle.

"In 1814 S.T.C. had been long, very long, in the habit of taking from two quarts of laudanum a week to a pint a day, and on one occasion he had been known to take in the twenty-four hours a whole quart of laudanum. The serious expenditure of money resulting from this habit was the least evil, though very great, and must have absorbed all the produce of his writings and lectures and the liberalities of his friends."

Cottle addressed to him a letter of not very delicate remonstrance on the subject, to which Coleridge replied in his wontedly humble strain.

We speak of De Quincey as "The Opium Eater," and he admits that he had been in the habit of taking 8,000 drops (i.e. seven wineglasses) of

laudanum a day, which he reduced to eighty, but never gave up altogether ; but De Quincey tells us that he had talked with a surgeon in the North who had supplied Coleridge with laudanum and who calculated the quantity which he consumed as 80,000 drops a day, and related how the first time Coleridge went to the house of the surgeon he was not at home, but his wife supplied Coleridge and was alarmed at seeing him drink off a large wineglassful. She explained to him what it was, and very soon afterwards saw him drink off another glassful, and *before* he left the house he had emptied a half pint bottle in addition. Conscious of the evil and deeply deploring it, in the spring of 1816 he separated from his family and went to live in London in Dr. Gillman's house at Highgate, where he remained till his death nineteen years after, and here he certainly broke himself of the opium habit, and also ceased to be a Unitarian.

1816 was another active year, for in it he published his *Biographia Literaria* or *Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*, with its inimitable criticisms on Shakespeare. "Its main value," says Trail, "is to be found in the contents of seven chapters, from the fourteenth to the twentieth ; but it is not going too far to say that, in respect of these, it is literally priceless. No such analysis of the principles of poetry—no such exact discrimination of what was sound in the modern 'return-to-nature' movement from what was false—has ever been accomplished by any other critic, or with such admirable completeness by this consummate critic at any other time."

He also brought out in this year the *Sibylline Leaves*, a reissue of his poems numbered Vol. II; he intended Vol. I to be a new volume, but with characteristic ineptitude he never got Vol. written. *Zapolya*, a Christmas tale, was written in the previous year, and 2,000 copies of it were sold off in six weeks. In this are two exquisite little songs —

A sunny shaft did I behold,
and

Up, up! ye dames and lasses gay!
To the meadows trip away.
'Tis you must tend the flocks this morn,
And scare the small birds from the corn.
Not a soul at home may stay:
For the shepherds must go
With lance and bow
To hunt the wolf in the woods to-day,

which seems to have quite a Shakespearian ring.

In 1816 he also published *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel*, both fragments and both dating from 1797, the first great year of his poetic prime at Nether Stowey. Nothing he has written is better than the lines from *Christabel*—

Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain.
And thus it chanced, as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline.
Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother:
They parted, ne'er to meet again!
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining;

They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder ;
A dreary sea now flows between.
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

In 1820, walking in a lane near Highgate with Mr. Green he met " a loose, slack, not well-dressed youth " (so he writes in his *Table-Talk*). " Green knew him and spoke : it was Keats. He was introduced to me and stayed a minute or so. After he had left us a little way he came back and said, ' Let me carry away the memory, Coleridge, of having pressed your hand.' ' There is death in that hand,' I said to Green when Keats was gone ; yet this was, I believe, before consumption showed itself distinctly." Keats died early in the next year, February 1821.

In 1822 he wrote *Youth and Age*, after which he did little more in verse ; but nearly all his prose writing was done under Dr. Gillman's roof.

In 1828 he took a tour up the Rhine with the Wordsworths and from that time till his death he was visited by all the literary and scientific celebrities of the time. We hear of Wordsworth, Lamb, Landor, Julius Hare, F. D. Maurice, Harriet Martineau, Faraday, Emerson, Thirlwall, etc., etc., coming to listen to him, for he held constant conversazioni in Gillman's house at Highgate in which he astonished all his hearers by the brilliancy of his talk. But he would not always talk. There was always *one* difficulty with him, we are told, and sometimes *two*. It was sometimes a great difficulty to get him to begin to talk, and it was always so

to get him to stop. His nephew and son-in-law thus describes his conversation—

“To pass an entire day with Coleridge was a marvellous change indeed (from the talk of daily life). It was a Sabbath past expression, deep and tranquil and serene. You came to a man who had travelled in many countries and in critical times ; who had seen and felt the world in most of its ranks and in many of its vicissitudes and weaknesses ; one to whom all literature and art were absolutely subject ; and to whom, with a reasonable allowance as to technical details, all science was, in a most extraordinary degree, familiar. Throughout a long-drawn summer’s day would this man talk to you in low, equable, but clear and musical tones concerning things human and divine ; marshalling all history, harmonizing all experiment, probing the depths of your consciousness, and revealing visions of glory and terror to the imagination ; but pouring withal such floods of light upon the mind that you might for a season, like Paul, become blind in the very act of conversion.”

Of his reading, De Quincey says that Coleridge read slowly and monotonously and abstractedly, so that you could scarcely make out what he said and you lost the rhythm. *Southey* mouthed it out like a wolf howling. *Wilson* (Christopher North) put on a conventicle appearance the moment he began to read poetry and a Methodistical drawl that was quite distressing, while Wordsworth sometimes read very well.

To sum up, if we try to compare Coleridge with his contemporaries we have to admit, with his latest biographer, that inequality of style may detract

from the pleasure of reading Byron, that Wordsworth is not always equal to himself, "yet though the former may have taken only rough roads and the latter have led us through some desperately flat and dreary lowlands, to his favourite bits, still we feel that with them we have seen mountain and valley, wood and river, glen and waterfall at their best. But Coleridge's poetry leaves too much the feeling of a walk through a fine country on a misty day, and we come home feeling that we have not seen as much as we might have done." So many of his poems are unfinished, and, with the exception of the *Ancient Mariner*, his work is mostly disappointing. But that one poem is perfect, unique and unapproachable.

He died in 1834, aged 62, and is buried at Highgate in a grave now in the crypt of the School Chapel.

Principal Shairp in his *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, ends his account of Coleridge in these words—

"But the best thing that can be said of him is, that he was a great religious philosopher. And by this how much is meant? Not a religious man and a philosopher merely, but a man in whom these two powers met and interpenetrated. There are instances enough in which the two stand opposed, mutually denouncing each other; instances too there are in which, though not opposed, they live apart, the philosophy unleavened by the religion. How rare have been the examples, at least in modern times, in which the most original powers of intellect and imagination, the most ardent search for truth, and the largest

erudition, have united with reverence and simple Christian faith—the heart of the child with the wisdom of the sage ! ”

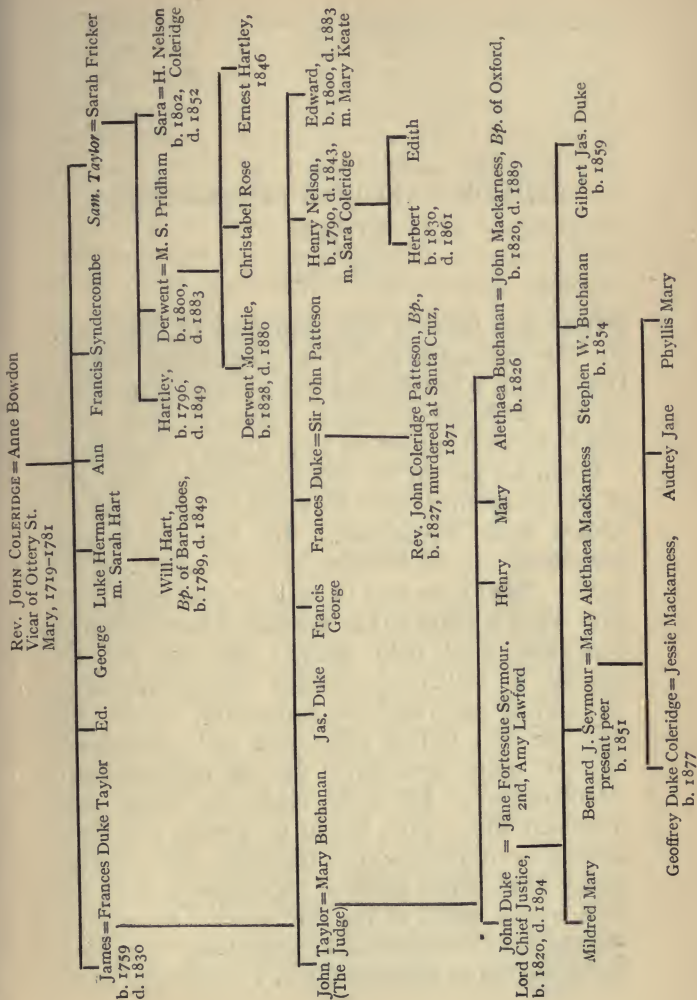
As to the poet's personal appearance we learn most, perhaps, from the account De Quincey has left us of his first meeting with Coleridge in 1807.

“ I had received directions for finding out the house where Coleridge was visiting ; and in riding down a main street in Bridgewater, I noticed a gateway corresponding to the description given me. Under this was standing and gazing about him a man whom I will describe. In height he might seem to be about five feet eight (he was in reality about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height) ; his person was tall and full, and tended even to corpulence ; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically style fair, because it was associated with black hair, his eyes were large and soft in their expression (you will remember that Wordsworth speaks of him as ‘ a noticeable man with large grey eyes ’) ; and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess which mixed with their light that I recognized my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him stedfastly for a minute or more, and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street. He was in a deep reverie, for I had dismounted and advanced close to him before he had apparently become conscious of my presence. The sound of my voice, announcing my name, first awoke him ; he started, and for a moment seemed at a loss to understand my purpose or his own situation. There was no *mauvaise honte* in his manner, but

simple perplexity and an apparent difficulty in recovering his position amongst daylight realities. This little scene over he received me with a kindness of manner so marked that it might be called gracious. . . . He led me to the drawing-room, rang the bell for refreshments, and omitted no point of a courteous reception . . . then, after discussing a little matter of business, Coleridge, like some great Orellana, or the St. Laurence, that, having been checked and fretted by rocks or thwarting islands, suddenly recovers its volume of waters and its mighty music, swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel and the most finely illuminated and traversing the most spacious fields of thought by transitions the most just and logical that it was possible to conceive."

This meeting made De Quincey such an enthusiastic admirer, that he insisted on Cottle conveying to Coleridge an anonymous loan of £300, a thing which he could ill afford to do. He also, a month previously, had escorted Mrs. Coleridge and her children from Nether Stowey to Wordsworth's House at Grasmere, where he made the acquaintance of his other great poetical idol. The account he gives of this first visit to Dove Cottage, in which he afterwards spent so many years himself, is most minute and extremely interesting.

A pedigree of the Coleridge family, from the poet's father downwards, is appended



CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE BYRON

1788-1824

BYRON was born in 1788 and died in 1824, aet. 36, the sole offspring of an ill-assorted couple. His mother, whose fortune was quickly squandered by her profligate husband, separated from him and lived with her son on £130 a year in Aberdeen.

When he was 10 the boy succeeded to the title of his grand-uncle and they moved to Newstead Abbey near Nottingham. He was quick and passionate and his bringing up accentuated all his faults. Well born and ill bred he was sensitively alive when a youth to the lameness which debarred him from most field sports; the one athletic exercise in which he excelled being swimming, and having no friends or connexions of his own rank, he was full of affectation and prejudices. Shy but quite remarkable for the extraordinary attachments of his early years, his nobler and truer self which gave life to his poetry was from childhood overlaid with artificiality, and a swaggering tone, which made it impossible to love the man, spoilt much of his best work. He seldom allowed his true opinions and emotions to appear, but preferred to masquerade in a costume of cyni-

cism and weak misanthropy which he could never abandon, so that, blended in his life and work there are always two distinct Byrons, and not to be disentangled, "for he cherished," says Mr. Addington Symonds, "his inferior self, and mistook its weakness and its falsehood for strength and sincerity of insight."

He went to Harrow, and, at 17, to Cambridge in 1805, in which year he published a volume of verse of no merit, for which he was fiercely attacked by Brougham in the *Edinburgh*. Brougham's sarcasm stung him into real poetry, and his Satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, was at once made much of. It is full of invective, a weapon he used all his life, and its judgments are really worthless. Indeed Byron never attained to the possession of any critical insight, and his strictures on his contemporaries are as ridiculous as his elevation of Pope above the heads of Milton and Shakespeare.

Leaving Cambridge he went abroad and returned in 1812 to publish the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, a poem on which his general reputation now chiefly rests, though probably *Don Juan* and *The Vision of Judgment* are those on which his fame will ultimately be founded. At all events *Childe Harold* took the reading public by storm, and Byron, as he says, "woke up one morning and found himself famous." The enthusiasm which greeted *Childe Harold's* appearance would be subject to some deductions now; for, to quote Mr. Addington Symonds again, "the poem is written in a declamatory style. The Pilgrim is a rococo creation to whom its author failed to

communicate the breath of life, and when this fictitious hero disappears from the scene the stanzas invariably improve. Therefore the third and fourth cantos, written in the plenitude of Byron's powers, when *Childe Harold* has been all but forgotten might pass for a separate composition. In these cantos, with the person of the Pilgrim the affectation of Spenserian language, sparsely but awkwardly employed in the first canto, is dropped. The vein of meditation is richer, deeper, more dignified in utterance. The personal emotion of the poet, saddened, and elevated by his cruel experience of life, finds vent in larger harmonies and more impassioned bursts of eloquence ; while his enjoyment of Nature in her grander aspects is expressed with solemnity in the passages upon the Ocean and the Jura thunderstorm."

There is no concealing of the fact that Byron's life was one of self-indulgence and excess, and it was in an attempt to escape from it that he married Miss Milbanke, the daughter of a Durham baronet. The union proved singularly unhappy and after a year Lady Byron, with her daughter Ada, left her husband, went to live at her father's house, and refused to return.

Byron now became the subject of general reprobation and was accused of every vice ; and though his poetry was popular the Author became very much the reverse. Again he left England in 1815. " I felt," he writes, " that if what was whispered and muttered and murmured was true I was unfit for England ; if false, England was unfit for me. I withdrew."

This exile, though the life he led was lawless as

ever, marks a fresh increase in his poetic powers which we notice at once in Canto III of *Childe Harold*, written at Geneva in 1816, and in Canto IV, written at Venice in 1818. The poem was the outcome of his wanderings and, like *Don Juan*, is a sort of diary ; the verse full of digressions and personal feelings and invective, but with frequent and beautiful descriptions of each place he passed through or stayed in.

After 1818 the next four years were occupied with *Don Juan* and then with *The Vision of Judgment*, a satire on a poem of the same name by Southey whom he treats to his fullest flow of invective.

In 1823 he set out for Greece to endeavour to help her to obtain her independence. Hellas and Liberty were inspirations to him, and he wrote no finer lines than those on Greece in the Fourth Canto of *Don Juan*.

The Isles of Greece ! The Isles of Greece !
 Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
 Where grew the arts of War and Peace,
 Where Delos rose, and Phœbus sprung !
 Eternal Summer gilds them yet,
 But all, except their sun, is set.

* * * *

The mountains look on Marathon—
 And Marathon looks on the sea ;
 And musing there an hour alone,
 I dreamed that Greece might still be free ;
 For standing on the Persians' grave,
 I could not deem myself a slave.

Childe Harold professes to be a descriptive poem, but it is more truly an analysis and exhibition of the writer's own feelings and reflections, and the third Canto is mainly autobiographical. Byron's nature being one which needed pain to deepen it,

the blows of fortune always tended to increase his poetic power, and as he died at the early age of 36 naturally his later is a great advance on his earlier work, for whatever he gained of wisdom and insight was not from reading or wise companionship but simply and solely from experience.

SHELLEY

1792-1822

SHELLEY was born at Field Place, near Horsham, on August 4, 1792, and was drowned in the bay of Spezzia, off Via Reggio, July 8, 1822, only a year after he had written his beautiful lament for the death of his brother poet, Keats, who died at Rome, February 23, 1821. There the remains of both the poets now rest together. The drowning of Shelley is commemorated in England by beautiful sculptured memorials both in the old Abbey of Christ Church, Hants, and more recently in University College, Oxford, from which he was expelled in his first undergraduate year for publishing a pamphlet on *The Necessity of Atheism*.

He was a contemporary of the Lake poets Southey, Coleridge and Wordsworth, a close friend of Byron, and knew Keats. How young they were, that remarkable band of poets! Byron died at 36, Shelley at 30, and Keats at 25.

Shelley was well born and heir to a baronetcy. His father was not distinguished, but Sir Bysshe Shelley, his grandfather, was a man of ability and means. In appearance Shelley was fair, tall and slender, with a small head, blue eyes, always noticeably bright, and light brown hair, his voice as a boy was sweet but as a man unmusical. He

was extremely quick at learning and was always reading, his first choice being books of science and novels, and later, philosophy, English poetry and Greek. When his body was washed up on the shore of the Mediterranean he had a Sophocles in his left pocket and a Keats, doubled back as if thrust hurriedly away, in the other. The father and son had nothing in common either in character or tastes.

After two years' schooling at Sion House, Brentford, he went to Eton and thence to Oxford. At Eton his chief delight was chemistry, and even then he got the nickname of "The Atheist." He cared for no boys' pastimes, but brave, gentle and generous by nature, he was all his life boyish and impulsive and of unusually strong feelings; and a deed of injustice or cruelty always roused in him the sharpest indignation. But his chief characteristic was that he was always opposed to all conventionality, whence he carried on an exaggerated warfare all his life with the world's opinion, that is the keynote of his life. Of course, little good could be got out of that, for practically the world must be arranged to suit the ordinary man, and poets must, as Shelley says—

Be cradled into poesy by wrong
And learn in suffering what they teach in song.

This is what Æschylus says in the lines from the *Agamemnon* which Gray prefixed to his *Hymn to Adversity*. That Zeus taught men wisdom and made it a law that learning should come to mortals through suffering.

While still at Eton he wrote a novel called

Zostrossi and got £40 for it, as much as Gray made by literature in the whole course of his life. He spent it all on giving a supper to his Eton friends.

At 18 he published a volume with the title *Original Poetry, by Victor and Cazire*, and ordered 1,480 copies to be printed, though he had no money to pay for them. Novels and pamphlets, none of them of any value, chiefly occupied his pen for some years.

When driven from Oxford, his father forbidding him to come home, he went with his Oxford friend Hogg to live in London, and when only 19 he met at his sister's school at Clapham (he had four sisters and one brother) a Miss Harriet Westbrooke. He was then still in love with his cousin, Harriet Grove, but this attachment was prohibited upon his expulsion, and when two years after his marriage he dedicated one of his poems (*Queen Mab*) in terms of affection "*to Harriet*" it was not and never has been made clear to which he was referring. This poem, begun in 1810, was published in 1813, and did his reputation nothing but harm on account of its revolutionary opinions on love and marriage, and its shameless atheism.

Harriet Westbrooke was 16, the pretty and lady-like daughter of a Jew coffee-house keeper. Shelley heard she was ill-treated at home and at once became her champion, on which she turned to him as her protector, which flattered him and, to make a long story short, though he had always a decided horror of matrimony, he eloped with her and they were married by Scotch rites in Edinburgh: and they lived on Shelley's allowance of £200 a year happily enough until another "exposition of

marriage " came over him, when he deserted her for Mary Godwin. The Lord Chancellor Eldon, subsequently deprived him of the custody of his two children Ianthè and Charles, born in 1813 and 1814, partly on the grounds of his desertion of his wife and partly on account of the views he had expressed in *Queen Mab*.

The chief cause of dissatisfaction with his first marriage was that his wife's sister, Eliza, whom he hated, as he says, with all his heart and soul, insisted on living with them and dominating their household. Once he fled to Keswick, but did not succeed in shaking her off for long. At Keswick of all the Lake poets he only saw Southey, and there began his poem *Queen Mab*. He also first wrote to W. Godwin in praise of his book about *Political Justice*, and tells him that he and his wife are off to Ireland " to forward as much as we can the Catholic emancipation." " My wife," he adds, " is the partner of my thoughts and feelings." He often wrote to people he did not know, and thus made great friends by letter with a Miss Hitchener and insisted on her coming to live with them in Wales at Tan-yr-allt, but on closer inspection his enthusiasm evaporated and she is generally referred to in his subsequent letters as " the Brown Demon." Returning to Town in 1813, Eliza again joined them in a house in Half-Moon Street. Here Shelley was to be seen all day in a projecting window with a book in his hand. " He wanted," said one of his lady admirers, " only a pan of clear water and a fresh turf to look like some young lady's lark hanging outside for air and song."

Now Shelley was no reprobate, he had the moral sense very strongly developed, and a most acute sense of right and wrong ; his mind and his thought and language were quite remarkably pure, his benevolence and philanthropy and his hatred of all oppression were boundless, but he was a sworn enemy to all convention, and when he fell in with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, whose parents held and taught their children the same ideas as Shelley himself held on the wrongfulness of being bound by the conventional ideas of marriage, it was but following out the principles they considered right, when they agreed to live and work together, just as they were, for the emancipation of mankind. Hence though for the sake of his children he had remarried his wife with English rites at St. George's, Hanover Square, only a few weeks elapsed before he left her altogether for Mary Godwin. At first Mary lived with her parents, but soon they left for the Continent, crossing in an open boat accompanied by Miss Clairmont, Mary's half-sister, who became the mother of Byron's child Allegra.

Shelley and Byron spent their days together and lived much together for the next six years, and Byron writes of Shelley : " He was the most gentle, the most amiable, the least worldly-minded person I ever met, full of delicacy, disinterested beyond all other men, and possessing a degree of genius joined to simplicity as rare as it is admirable. He had formed to himself a beau ideal of all that is fine, high-minded and noble, and he acted up to this ideal even to the very letter." His unconventional ways and his generosity are

illustrated by the following extract from *Trelawny's Record*, vol. i., p. 120 :—

“ After returning with Shelley from Leghorn, I put up my chaise at the hostelry, and went in to dine with Mrs. Shelley. All fixed rules of feeding the poet looked upon as ridiculous ; he grazed when he was hungry, anywhere, at any time. Mrs. Shelley conformed to the ways of the world in all things that she could.

“ Finding no one about the house, I went into his library ; the poet was untying the bag of scudi that we brought from Leghorn. Standing up he turned out the bag on to the hearthrug, and the glittering coins bespangled the floor. It was amusing to see him scraping them together with the shovel out of the fireplace ; having adroitly got them into a lump he pressed them as flat as he could with his foot, then skilfully with the shovel divided them as nearly as possible into two equal portions ; one of the halves he divided again into two equal portions by guesswork, saying to Mary, ‘ That half will feed the house and pay the rent,’ then pointing to the smaller portion he said, ‘ That will do for you. This is my portion.’

“ Then he spoke lower to her that I might not hear, but she told me that he said, ‘ I will give this to poor Tom Medwin, who wants to go to Naples and has no money.’

“ I said to Mary as we were dining, ‘ Why, he has left nothing for himself.’

“ She said, ‘ No, if he wants anything he tells me to get it, and if he wants a scudo to give any one, perhaps I lend it him (smiling), but he can’t be trusted with money, and he won’t have it.’ ”

They remained abroad, travelling on foot, with their baggage on a donkey, until want of funds drove them back to England, and for a time they lived in poverty till the death of Sir Bysshe Shelley in 1815, when Shelley was allowed £1,000 a year, a portion of which was at once set aside for his wife Harriet. She went down the hill, left her parents, and took up with a man who soon left her, and in 1816, in despair, being cast off by husband, lover, and parents, she drowned herself. For this tragedy Shelley was entirely responsible, and what a commentary on this it is to find that at the time he was busy with his autobiographical poem *Alastor*, which expresses his devotion to Ideal Beauty.

The Revolt of Islam, called at first *Laon and Cythna*, a poem in twelve books, containing some 4,000 lines, is still more representative of its author.

“Shelley’s passionate belief in friendship—I quote from Mr. Addington Symonds—his principle of the equality of women with men, his demand for bloodless revolution, his confidence in eloquence and reason to move nations, his doctrine of free love, his vegetarianism, his hatred of religious intolerance and tyranny—are blent together and concentrated in the glowing cantos of this wonderful romance. The hero, Laon, is himself idealized, the self which he imagined when he undertook his Irish campaign. The heroine, Cythna, is the help-mate he had always dreamed, the woman exquisitely feminine, yet capable of being fired with male enthusiasms, and of grappling the real problems of our nature with a man’s firm grasp. In the first edition of the poem he made Laon and Cythna

brother and sister, not because he believed in the desirability of incest, but because he wished to throw a glove down to society, and to attack the intolerance of custom in its stronghold. In the preface, he tells us that it was his purpose to kindle in the bosoms of his readers 'a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence, nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever wholly extinguish among mankind'; to illustrate 'the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind'; and to celebrate Love 'as the sole law which should govern the moral world.' The wild romantic treatment of this didactic motive makes the poem highly characteristic of its author. It is written in Spenserian stanzas, with a rapidity of movement and a dazzling brilliance that are Shelley's own. The story relates the kindling of a nation to freedom at the cry of a young poet-prophet, the temporary triumph of the good cause, the final victory of despotic force, and the martyrdom of the hero, together with whom the heroine falls a willing victim. It is full of thrilling incidents and lovely pictures; yet the tale is the least part of the poem; and few readers have probably been able either to sympathize with its visionary characters, or to follow the narrative without weariness. As in the case of other poems by Shelley—especially those in which he attempted to tell a story, for which kind of art his genius was not well suited—the central motive of *Laon and Cythna* is surrounded by so radiant a photosphere of imagery and eloquence that it is difficult

to fix our gaze upon it, blinded as we are by the excess of splendour. Yet no one now can read the terrible tenth canto, or the lovely fifth, without feeling that a young eagle of poetry had here tried the full strength of his pinions in their flight. This truth was by no means recognized when *Laon and Cythna* first appeared before the public. Hooted down, derided, stigmatized, and howled at, it only served to intensify the prejudice with which the author of *Queen Mab* had come to be regarded.

“ I have spoken of this poem under its first name of *Laon and Cythna*. A certain number of copies were issued with this title; but the publisher, Ollier, not without reason, dreaded the effect the book would make; he therefore induced Shelley to alter the relationship between the hero and his bride, and issued the old sheets with certain cancelled pages under the title of *Revolt of Islam*. It was published in January 1818.

“ While still resident at Marlow, Shelley began two autobiographical poems—the one *Prince Athanase*, which he abandoned as too introspective and morbidly self-analytical, the other *Rosalind and Helen*, which he finished afterwards in Italy. Of the second of these compositions he entertained a poor opinion; nor will it bear comparison with his best work. To his biographer its chief interest consists in the character of Lionel, drawn less perhaps exactly from himself than as an ideal of the man he would have wished to be. The poet in *Alastor*, Laon in the *Revolt of Islam*, Lionel in *Rosalind and Helen*, and Prince Athanase are in fact a remarkable row of self-portraits, varying in the tone and scale of idealistic treatment

bestowed upon them. Later on in life, Shelley outgrew this preoccupation with his idealized self, and directed his genius to more objective themes." (pp. 96-8, *English Men of Letters*.)

Shelley in December 1816, urged no doubt by Godwin, who in spite of his anti-matrimonial principles was fully alive to the advantages of his daughter being properly married to the heir to a baronetcy, married Mary Godwin and settled in Marlow to write *The Revolt of Islam*, and whilst there he frequently ran up to Hampstead to Leigh Hunt's house where he met Keats and Peacock and Horace Smith and his brother, the authors of *Rejected Addresses*.

In 1817 his daughter Clara was born, and lest the Lord Chancellor should lay hands on her too, and also because he himself showed signs of delicate health, he left for Italy in the spring of 1818, never to return.

Only four years of life was now left to Shelley, years filled with music that will sound as long as English lasts. Yet even then he considered poetry as "very subordinate to moral and political science" but his attempts in these directions are all unfinished or fragmentary, and he was wise to abandon them for poetry.

Clara died an infant in Venice in 1818, and in 1819 his three-year-old son William died at Rome, and another son who survived and became Sir Percy Florence Shelley was born at Florence, November 1819.

From Italy he wrote a series of letters to his friend Peacock, to whom he generously made an allowance of £100 a year, and these letters are

among Shelley's best productions. The Shelleys visited Milan, the Italian Lakes, Venice, Rome and Naples. Then Byron lent them his villa at Este, from which they moved first to Rome and then to Villa Valsovano at Leghorn. At Rome and Leghorn he was working at his *Prometheus Unbound*; and this year of 1819 is remarkable for the productions of this and another of his chief works, *The Cenci*, begun and finished at Leghorn. It is no exaggeration to say that *The Cenci* is the greatest tragedy written since Shakespeare's time. He rightly felt that it would be popular, and, were it not for the difficulty of getting any great actress to take the part of Beatrice, it would make a sure success on the stage. The *Prometheus Unbound* is the sequel to the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus; it is quite unique, but difficult. "It was never intended," he says, "for more than five or six persons, though of a higher character than anything I have yet attempted." As a matter of fact, Prometheus fell still-born from the press, and almost everything Shelley produced was received with howls, while personal abuse and unpopularity were his only rewards, and yet he felt, as Keats and Wordsworth had also done, that his work would live. "This I know," he said to his cousin Captain Medwin, who lived with him at Pisa, "that whether in prosing or in versing there is something in my writings that shall live for ever," and again, "If my feeble and irritable frame were willing to obey the spirit, I fancy that I should do great things."

In 1820 they went to Pisa, where the Medwins and Byron and Trelawney and Mr. and Mrs. Wil-

liams were their constant companions. Mrs. Williams is the "Jane" to whom he wrote and made love with such fervent admiration, though Mr. Williams and Mrs. Shelley shared the love letters. From Pisa they passed in April 1822 to Lerici, on the Gulf of Spezzia, but it was at Pisa that the two great poems, *Epipsychidion* and *Adonais* were composed, in 1821. Of the former he writes: "It is an idealized history of my life and feelings. I think one is always in love with something or other." Of the latter, "the *Adonais* is the least imperfect of all my compositions, better perhaps in point of composition than anything I have written." The charming little lyric, "Music whose soft voices die," also belongs to 1821.

The origin of *Epipsychidion* is thus given by Symonds—

"Among his Italian acquaintances at Pisa, was a clever but disreputable Professor, of whom Medwin draws a very piquant portrait. This man one day related the sad story of a beautiful and noble lady, the Comtessina Emilia Viviani, who had been confined by her father in a dismal convent of the suburbs, to await her marriage with a distasteful husband. Shelley, fired as ever by a tale of tyranny, was eager to visit the fair captive. The Professor accompanied him and Medwin to the convent-parlour, where they found her more lovely than even the most glowing descriptions had led them to expect. Nor was she only beautiful. Shelley soon discovered that she had 'cultivated her mind beyond what I have ever met with in Italian women'; and a rhapsody composed by her upon the subject of Uranian Love—*Il Vero Amore*—

justifies the belief that she possessed an intellect of more than ordinary elevation. He took Mrs. Shelley to see her, and both did all they could to make her convent-prison less irksome, by frequent visits, by letters, and by presents of flowers and books. It was not long before Shelley's sympathy for this unfortunate lady took the form of love, which, however spiritual and platonic, was not the less passionate. The result was the composition of *Epipsychidion*, the most unintelligible of all his poems to those who have not assimilated the spirit of Plato's *Symposium* and Dante's *Vita Nuova*. In it he apostrophizes Emilia Viviani as the incarnation of ideal beauty, the universal loveliness made visible in mortal flesh :—

Seraph of Heaven ! too gentle to be human,
Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman
All that is insupportable in thee
Of light, and love, and immortality !

He tells her that he loves her, and describes the troubles and deceptions of his earlier manhood, under allegories veiled in deliberate obscurity. The Pandemic and the Uranian Aphrodite have striven for his soul ; for though in youth he dedicated himself to the service of ideal beauty, and seemed to find it under many earthly shapes, yet has he ever been deluded. At last Emily appears, and in her he recognizes the truth of the vision veiled from him so many years. She and Mary shall henceforth, like sun and moon, rule the world of love within him. Then he calls on her to fly. They three will escape and live together, far away from men, in an Ægean island. The description

of this visionary isle, and of the life to be led there by the fugitives from a dull and undiscerning world, is the most beautiful that has been written this century in the rhymed heroic metre.

It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise ;
And, for the harbours are not safe and good,
This land would have remained a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
Simple and spirited, innocent and bold.
The blue Ægean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam
Kissing the sifted sands and caverns hoar ;
And all the winds wandering along the shore
Undulate with the undulating tide.
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide ;
And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air. And far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer,
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year,)
Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
Illumining, with sound that never fails
Accompany the noonday nightingales ;
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs.
The light clear element which the isle wears
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,
And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep ;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep,
And dart their arrowy odour through the brain,
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.

It is a favoured place. Famine or Blight,
Pestilence, War, and Earthquake, never light
Upon its mountain-peaks ; blind vultures, they
Sail onward far upon their fatal way.
The winged storms, chanting their thunder-psalm
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
From which its fields and woods ever renew
Their green and golden immortality.

“Shelley did not publish *Epipsychidion* with his own name. He gave it to the world as the composition of a man who had ‘died at Florence, as he was preparing for a voyage to one of the Sporades,’ and he requested Ollier not to circulate it, except among a few intelligent readers. It may almost be said to have been never published, in such profound silence did it issue from the press. Very shortly after its appearance he described it to Leigh Hunt as ‘a portion of me already dead,’ and added this significant allusion to its subject matter: ‘Some of us have in a prior existence been in love with an Antigone, and that makes us find no full content in any mortal tie.’ In the letter of June 18, 1822, again he says: ‘The *Epipsychidion* I cannot look at; the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno. If you are curious, however, to hear what I am and have been, it will tell you something thereof. It is an idealized history of my life and feelings. I think one is always in love with something or other; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal.’ This paragraph contains the essence of a just criticism.” (*English Men of Letters*, pp. 138-41.)

For Shelley there hits the blot on the poem. His mistake was that he worshipped in Emily an incarnation of the ideal loveliness instead of regarding her as only a step in the ladder, a far-off image of the ideal which to mortals is unattainable. The poem is interesting as containing his doctrine of love; and if you wish to see a good specimen of

Shelley's most impassioned manner you have only to turn to the last two pages of it.

At Pisa he also wrote *Hellas*, in October 1821, on hearing that Greece was determined to strike a blow for freedom. *Hellas* is a "Lyrical Drama," the beautiful final chorus of which begins with the well-known lines—

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The Earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn :
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

Pisa also saw the production of *The Sensitive Plant*, and most of his beautiful shorter poems such as *The Cloud*, *The Skylark*, *Arethusa*, the *Hymns to Apollo and Pan*, *The Witch of Atlas*, *Autumn*, and many little gems of poetry. Here too *The Invocation to Night* and *Ariel to Miranda* (Mrs. Williams again) were composed, mostly out of doors, and scribbled on any scrap of paper. About his method of composition he wrote : "When my brain gets heated with thought it soon boils and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off. In the morning, when cooled down, out of this 'rude sketch' I shall attempt a drawing."

In 1822, as the summer drew near, they moved out of Pisa to cooler quarters in the Villa Magni near Lerici on the Gulf of Spezzia. Here the lyric *When the lamp is shattered* and the *Lines to a Lady with a Guitar* were written. A long unfinished poem called *The Triumph of Life* was begun in that difficult metre called Terza Rima. The lines are iambics like blank verse, but the first and third

lines of each three-lined stanza rhyme together—the middle line rhymes with the first and third of the next triplet. His last work was in 1821, and from the list of his works we have mentioned as written in 1819, 1820 and 1821, it will be seen that with Shelley as with Keats the last years of life were one burst of melody and that the flame of poetry burnt brightest towards its close.

Boating and bathing were his delight, and he and Williams had a frail and crank little boat built to their own designs at Genoa called the *Don Juan* by Byron, but re-named by Shelley the *Ariel*. Byron had a larger decked boat built at the same time called the *Bolivar*. These boats they had when at the "Villa Magni" on the Bay of Spezzia, whence on July 1, 1822, Shelley and Williams and a young English sailor called Charles Vivian, 18 years of age, sailed to Leghorn to greet the Leigh Hunts. Shelley drove with them to Byron's Villa at Pisa, and returning set sail from Leghorn rather late in the day of July 8. Trelawney on the *Bolivar* watched them till they disappeared in a sea-fog; soon a tempest arose with wind, rain and thunder, it lasted only twenty minutes, but when it cleared the *Ariel* had gone. The stove-in side of the boat when dredged up showed that she had been run down by a sharp-prowed felucca, but whether accidentally or with evil intent it was not easy then to say. Two had been seen by Trelawney to start when Shelley did and to return after the storm, one having on board an English-made oar which may have belonged to the *Ariel*. Even without a collision such a boat was not likely to ride out a Mediterranean squall. But forty-one

years later an old fisherman on his death-bed confessed how he and four others had run her down in a squall, thinking that Lord Byron was on board with a bag of gold, and that she sank at once and so they got nothing. Shelley had taken on board a canvas bag of Tuscan crown pieces, and as the crank little boat carried two or three tons of pig-iron to bring her down to her bearings she naturally sank at once when the side was stove in.

The bodies of Shelley and the lad were cast up after ten days and that of Williams a day later, and all buried in the sand. A month later two of them were cremated there, in the presence of Byron and Leigh Hunt, by Trelawney, and Williams's ashes were sent home, but Shelley's buried by his son's grave and not far from Keats, in the Protestant cemetery at Rome with this inscription—

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Cor Cordium

natus IV Aug. 1792. obiit July VIII 1822

Nothing of him that doth fade,

But doth suffer a sea change

Into something rich and strange.

His heart, which was unconsumed by the fire, was given by Trelawney to Mrs. Shelley and by her to Leigh Hunt, and by him some years later handed over to Sir Percy Shelley and deposited at Boscombe, Shelley's place, between Bournemouth and Christchurch. Mary Woolstoncraft Shelley herself many years later was laid to rest in the churchyard of St. Peter's, Bournemouth, not without great opposition on the part of many of the parishioners. "And so," writes Lady Shelley, "the sea and the earth closed over one who was great as a poet and

still greater as a philanthropist, and of whom it may be said that his wild spiritual character seems to have prepared him for being thus snatched from life under circumstances of mingled terror and beauty while his powers were yet in their Spring freshness and age had not come to render the Ethereal body decrepit or to wither the heart which could not be consumed by fire."

Shelley has been called "a beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain"; and for many years it was in vain—witness the failure of *The Revolt of Islam*—for this reason, that Shelley had not realized that he could not possibly represent the triumph of his political ideas in poetry, as that is not, in the nature of things, a fit subject for poetic representation.

Keats pointed out this when he said that Shelley was not sufficiently an artist. He meant—and we have to say the same of Browning and of Coleridge in his earlier years—that he chose his subjects badly, for he did not stop to consider whether a subject was susceptible of poetic treatment. Hence the inequality of his verse. But when the subject was right, even though he wrote often in frenzied haste, who can equal the lyric beauty of his verse? It seems more akin to the waves of the sea or the winds and stars than to any process of human art.

JOHN KEATS

1795-1821

MR. ROBERT BRIDGES, to whose essay on Keats I am much indebted, begins his critical introduction to the Poems of John Keats with this sentence: "If one English Poet might be recalled to-day from the dead to continue the work which he left unfinished on earth, it is probable that the crown of his country's desire would be set on the head of John Keats; and this general feeling is based on a judgment of his work which we may unhesitatingly accept, namely, that the best of it is of the highest excellence, but the mass of it is disappointing."

A study of the poems will probably lead us all to agree with this: but to understand and appreciate Keats it is necessary that we should be acquainted with the history of his life, and this, I think, is more especially so in his case than in that of any other English poet.

His father came from Cornwall, and was stableman to John Jennings, who kept a livery stable at the *Swan and Hoop*, Moorfields, in North London. Having married his employer's daughter, Keats succeeded to the management of the business and lived at the stable, where on October 29, 1795, their eldest child, John, the poet, was prematurely

born, a fact which doubtless affected his temperament. The other children who followed one another at intervals of two years were George, Thomas, Edward, and Frances, of whom the first and last outlived John. Both his parents were rather superior to their station. The father was a remarkably intelligent man of irreproachable conduct. The mother, and *her* mother before her, are spoken of as women who combined uncommon talents with great good sense.

The parents were anxious to do the best they could for their sons, and thought of sending John to Harrow, but the expense being beyond their means they sent him, when in his eighth year, to a good private school kept by the Rev. John Clarke at Enfield, where Mrs. Keats' brothers had been educated. Before this the family had moved half a mile further north to Craven Street, City Road. In 1804 Keats lost his father, who was killed by a fall from his horse; but Keats and his brothers stayed at Enfield for the next six years. John, as a boy, was handsome, pugnacious and loveable; he excelled at all active exercises and with a vehement temper and a kind and generous heart he is described as being "always in extremes." Books he cared little for, until his last year, when he gave all his energies to reading and study. This was probably due to Mr. Clarke's son, Cowden Clarke, who taught him, and inspired him with a love for literature. In 1810 his mother died, and John was taken from school and bound apprentice for five years to a surgeon in Edmonton. He often went back to Enfield, and borrowed books from Cowden Clarke. One day in 1812 or 1813 Clarke

read to him Spenser's *Epithalamion*. It made a deep impression on him, and the *Faerie Queen*, which he carried home with him, revealed a new world to him into which he entered with ecstasy. Naturally therefore his first poetical attempt was in imitation of Spenser. It was the nature of Keats to be dominated by successive poets, and he took up each new poet with such eagerness, and so steeped himself in their writings, that you may always tell with ease from the style of his own writing what author he has last been studying, whether Leigh Hunt, Dryden, Wordsworth, Milton or Shakespeare. When he reads Milton or Shakespeare he writes something like Milton or Shakespeare; when Spenser or Dryden or Leigh Hunt dominate him, you find his verse sparking with Spenser, constrained by Dryden or tainted by Hunt's style; but though Spenser gave way to Homer, Homer to Milton and so on, it was Spenser that furnished him in his last and best period with his admiration for Greek Art, for he knew no Greek himself and, though as a boy he learnt his *Lempriere's Classical Dictionary* by heart, it was Spenser's handling of the tales of Romance and his own eager reading of the Elizabethan poets that gave him the power to write as he did on Greek subjects.

In 1815 he passed his medical examination and was appointed dresser in Guy's Hospital. But Poetry had taken possession of him, and between 1814 and 1816, when he came of age, he was being gradually more and more absorbed by it. In 1815, indeed, he had produced his sonnet, *Written on the day Mr. Leigh Hunt left prison*, and in the same

year when Cowden Clarke had left Enfield and come to live in Clerkenwell, Keats frequently saw him, and together they read the translation of Homer which resulted in Keats' world-famous sonnet, *On first looking into Chapman's Homer*.

The sonnet on Leigh Hunt's release (he had been imprisoned for two years for the remark in the *Examiner*, which was held to be libellous, that the Prince Regent was in reality a corpulent man of fifty without a single claim on the gratitude of his country), brought him Hunt's friendship, and Keats was immensely taken with him. Without doubt Keats gained many valuable hints and not a few friends from Hunt's kindness, but his effect on Keats' style, as seen in his early poems which are dedicated to him, and notably in *Endymion*, which was dedicated to Chatterton, was deplorable.

Hunt, besides being without depth of thought, was often slipshod in language, and trivial, allowing himself the use of cant and even vulgar phrases, and colloquialisms, and as Keats looked up to Hunt it followed that his admiration for Hunt's *Rimini* led him to copy his friend, and thus all Keats' own faults and the characteristic defects of his early genius were accentuated; for there was, by the very facts of his birth and breeding, a tendency in Keats to vulgarity, and especially in his views of women, with whom he said that he was never quite at ease, for in his Romantic Spenserian manner he idealized them, and was uncomfortable when he found them different, and of course he did not come into contact with any of the ideal sort in the kind of society to which he was born.

Hence, knowing nothing of real ladies and taking Hunt for his guide, he was content with the vulgarly sensuous or else rather commonplace females to whom Hunt's verse introduced him. He came to see his mistake later, but all his life, while his treatment of Nature is delicate and beautiful, his treatment of women is quite unworthy.

In 1816 Leigh Hunt published in the *Examiner* Keats' Sonnet *O Solitude*, in which the line—

Startles the wild bee from the foxglove bells—

reminds one of Wordsworth's—

Bees that soar for bloom
High on the highest peak of Furness fells,
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells,

and we know that, though he did not really like him, he did get a great deal from his study of Wordsworth.

In 1817 Keats published his first volume, of which the first poem, *I stood tiptoe*, was originally called *Endymion*, and it is in the same metre and the same style. It opens very happily; but the natural beauties of wood and garden crowd rather thickly on each other's heels; a pretty description of the minnows in the stream, evidently the model of Tennyson's lines in *Enid and Geraint*, is followed by the entrance of the dreadful female of the Huntian type which at once vulgarizes the whole scene, and the worst of it is that Keats evidently thinks that he is introducing a lovely creation and handling the subject with taste and delicacy. There are many beautiful thoughts and fancies in the poem, such as—

and then there crept
A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
Born of the very sigh that silence leaves;

or again—

Here are sweet peas on tiptoe for a flight
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white

There are also the first of many beautiful lines about the moon, in which Keats specially delighted, and some fine lines such as "Full in the speculation of the stars"; but these are sadly overlaid by the repeated "kisses" and "blisses" and other vulgarities which constantly offend against good taste. Later in life he became conscious that his women were failures and says in a letter that one cause of the unpopularity of his book was his tendency to class Women with Roses and Sweetmeats; but he did not live long enough to be able to see that there was any vulgarity in them. The volume contains the two sonnets we have mentioned above and ends with a very remarkable poem called *Sleep and Poetry*. In the poem Sleep, which figures the unawakened intelligence, is subordinated to Poetry, which reveals the mystery of life and Nature, or what Wordsworth calls "the soul of lonely places," and inspires ambition. Keats states his devotion to poetry and prays for inspiration; but, with a strange pathetic prescience, he doubts whether fate will grant him length of days. There is one very remarkable passage, lines 101 to 162, the meaning of which is precisely the same as that in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*; concerning this Keats explains his own ideas in a letter to Reynolds, written in 1818, thus: "I compare human life to a large Mansion of

many apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut to me. To put it shortly, The first is the infant chamber in which we remain as long as we do not think, the second is the chamber of Maiden-thought when we become intoxicated with the light and the pleasant wonders, and think of staying there for ever, but the increasing sense of the World's miseries and wrongs gradually darken the atmosphere; and now many doors appear, but all leading to dark passages, and we are in a mist. To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive, when he wrote *Tintern Abbey*; and it seems to me that his genius is explorative of these dark passages."

Wordsworth describes Keats' first chamber as—

The coarser pleasures of my boyish days
And their glad animal movements.

In the parallel passage to this Keats says that life is—

A pigeon tumbling in clear Summer air,
A laughing schoolboy without grief or care,
Riding the springy branches of an elm.

He then prays for ten years in which he may overwhelm himself in poesy, when he says he will pass the realms "of Flora and old Pan" and choose each pleasure that his fancy sees. This is the second chamber, and Keats' own mental attitude to Nature is well described in the parallel picture of Chamber II in Wordsworth, who describing his own youthful days says—

The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
The mountain and the deep and gloomy wood,

Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite ; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm
By thoughts supplied.

Both Keats and Wordsworth were eminently poets of Nature with this difference, that *Keats* describes the beauties he sees in Nature while Wordsworth describes the effect upon himself and upon humanity of those beauties, and their spiritual essence, for to him the physical and the moral law were one. The mountains and the aspects of Nature filled him with solemn thoughts : hence his poetry " sends its dignified and deep music into the heart of Man." ¹

Sweet as these studies of Nature have been to him, Keats now sees that he must reach forward to something more satisfying ; he asks himself—

And can I ever bid these joys farewell ?

and he answers at once—

Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of *human hearts*.

That, he truly felt, was the subject for the highest poetry and that he set himself to attain. He then proceeds to describe the third Chamber, but he does it in lines whose meaning is as obscure as the parallel description in Wordsworth is clear. Keats says—

Lo, I see afar
O'er-sailing the blue cragginess, a car
And steeds with streamy manes—the charioteer
Looks out upon the winds with glorious fear :

¹ See Introduction to Stopford Brooke's *Selections from Wordsworth*.

And now the numerous tramplings quiver lightly
 Above a huge cloud's ridge . . .
 And now I see that on a green hillside
 The charioteer with wondrous gesture talks
 To the trees and mountains : and there soon appear
 Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear," etc.

Wordsworth's fine passage is this—

And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thought ; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean, and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things.

Evidently Wordsworth has attained the sunlit heights whilst Keats is still groping in the mist of the valley.

After this he asks—

Is there so small a range
 In the present strength of manhood, that the high
 Imagination cannot freely fly
 As she was wont of old ?

Then he goes on to speak of the Elizabethan poets—

. . . Here her altar shone
 Even in this isle ; and who could paragon
 The fervid choir that lifted up a noise
 Of harmony ? . . .
 Could all this be forgotten ? Yes.

Then follows the well-known invective against the Augustan School, with a prophecy of the coming revival and a definition of the true object, or as he calls it—

The great end
Of poesy, that it should be a friend
To soothe the cares and lift the thoughts of man.

In his denunciation of Boileau and the Augustans
he has some very fine lines—

Ah, dismal souled !
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of Summer nights collected still to make
The morning precious : beauty was awake !
Why were ye not awake ?

He ends the poem by saying of his lines—

Howsoever they be done
I leave them as a father does his son.

He was conscious of great shortcomings and of great desires after better things ; but there are many single lines and passages which show that, young as he was, he had the true poetic instinct, though the accidents of his surroundings were against him.

He had been working in 1816 and 1817 at his longest poem *Endymion*, and in 1818 it was published. It is impossibly tedious to read. Keats himself calls it "a great trial of invention," for he had "to fill 4,000 lines with one bare circumstance." It is a curious medley of Classic and Romantic, of imagination and Nature. The movement is difficult to follow and there is a monotony about the action and a sameness in the oft-repeated and cloying epithets, but the poem opens finely, and throughout there occur passages of great beauty, while the *Ode to Sorrow* in Book IV is one of Keats' greatest achievements. In all

the poems the effect of his study and admiration for Spenser is evident ; he needed no one to point out to him the beauty in even the commonest things in Nature, and if only he could have added to the loveliness of his maidens the spirituality which Spenser breathed into them, they would have been of a more pleasing type. In spite of his determination to delineate human passion, he never succeeded, and possibly for the very reason that he was so devoted to natural beauty. He speaks in one of the Odes of his Muse being—

Unintellectual but Divine to me.

The appearance of *Endymion* was greeted by violent attacks full of ill-natured personalities, both in *Blackwood* and the *Quarterly Review*, notwithstanding the modest preface in which Keats had shown how perfectly he was aware of the many faults of the poem. These attacks met him on his return in weak health from a Northern tour. He saw his brother George and his bride off from Liverpool for America, and then with his friend Brown, one of the many singularly kind and helpful friends whom the charm of his nature attracted to him, he started for Lancaster and passed through the English Lakes from Bowness to Bassenthwaite, visiting the Druid Circle near Keswick, from which he draws a beautiful simile in *Hyperion*—

Like a dismal Cirque
Of Druid stones upon a forlorn moor,
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve
In dull November, and their chancel vault
The heaven itself is blinded throughout night.

Thence they went to Carlisle and Dumfries, the home of Burns, and after walking along the south-west coast they crossed to Ireland and back to Ayr, then to Glasgow and Oban, after which they did some very hard walking up into the Highlands and, the inns being of the worst, they suffered much discomfort; finally an expedition to Mull, over bad ground in severe weather, was quite too much for Keats. His throat gave him trouble, and he was ordered home by sea. This was the first appearance of a real breakdown in health from which may be traced the development of that hereditary tendency to consumption which carried him off three years later.

On seeing the reviews, Keats at first said he would write no more poetry, but he soon recovered his equanimity, and wrote: "Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own work," and with that prescience which all great poets seem to have, he writes in another letter: "This is a mere matter of the moment; I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death."

During the rest of 1818 and all 1819 Keats worked hard. He had been reading Shakespeare and Milton and under their inspiration he accomplished his best work. The volume published in 1820 contained not only his great though unfinished epic *Hyperion*, but also those famous Odes by writing which alone he stands in the top rank of English Poets. These are the *Odes to a Nightingale, to Psyche, on Melancholy, on Indolence, on a Grecian Urn* and *To Autumn*, for the

fragment of the *May Ode* with its famous line—

Leaving great verse unto a little clan

and the *Ode to Sorrow* in *Endymion*, Book IV, had been written earlier.

The most faultless of these is the *Ode to Autumn*, which has been truly styled “a masterpiece of English poetry.” But it nowhere equals the splendour of *The Nightingale*, which though not faultless contains more beauty than any other poem in our language of equal length, and the last six lines of each of the two first stanzas are among the most priceless gems of English literature.

Keats delighted in the song of a nightingale whose nest was in his friend Brown’s garden at Hampstead, and Brown tells us how the poet one morning took a chair out and sat under a plum tree for two or three hours, and on returning to the house he quietly thrust some scraps of paper behind the books, but Brown, with the author’s help, got the stanzas arranged and copied out and was allowed to do the same good office afterwards for several poems. Keats when once he had voiced his feeling seeming to care little what became of his lines; indeed he had written in the previous year, “I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful, even if my night’s labours should be burnt every morning, and no eye ever rest upon them.”

It is curious to note that in the first transcripts the two world-famous lines—

Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn

had instead of "magic" and "perilous," "the wide" casements and "keelless" seas.

The *Ode on a Grecian Urn* would by many be placed next in order of merit. Keats was captivated by the grace and beauty of the Elgin Marbles to which Haydon had introduced him.

Hyperion, as far as it goes, is the best epic we have since Milton. In it is set forth the fruitless struggle of the Titans, the earliest forces of the Universe, against the newer dynasty whose rule is based on a higher principle than mere brute force. This struggle culminates in the fall of Hyperion, the flaming Sun god, before Apollo the God of light and song,¹ for

'Tis the eternal law
That first in beauty should be first in might.

The poem has many superb passages, and falls off occasionally to the old weak manner which betrays the author of *Endymion*. But Keats broke it off, saying that it was too Miltonic and artificial; really the fault in it is the same as that in *Endymion*, it has little in it but imagination, and the story does not grow in a natural consecutive manner. To quote from Mr. Bridges: "The first two books describe the conditions of the Older Gods, and are impassioned with defeat, dismay, and collapse; the third introduces the New Hierarchy, and we expect to find them radiant, confident and irresistible; but there is no change in the colour of the poem; of the two Deities introduced, Apollo is

¹ See Prof. De Selincourts' *Introduction to the Poems of John Keats*.

weeping and raving, and Mnemosyne, who has deserted the Old Dynasty for her hope in the New, 'Wails morn and eventide.' It is plain that the story was strangling itself." Keats had been at work on it from September, 1818 to September 1819, the time when nearly all his best work was being done, for, besides *Hyperion* and *the Odes* the 1820 volume contains *Lamia*, *Isabella* and *The Eve of St. Agnes*, the latter being Spenserian in form. This was the last volume brought out by Keats, but a considerable number of poems were published after his death, amongst these one lyric of surprising beauty, written in 1818. *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. This and *The Eve of St. Agnes* are companion pictures of the Love which is life and the Love which is death. *Isabella* is Boccaccio's story, but while Boccaccio dwells on the incidents, which are horrible enough, Keats concerns himself with the passion of the story, and by his beautiful language and by the sympathy it invokes he raises the story to the level of genuine tragedy. *Lamia*, though not a pleasant subject, shows the influence of Dryden in the good construction of the story, but it is disfigured by the bad taste already spoken of, which Keats never outgrew. Lastly we have the re-cast of *Hyperion*, called *The Fall of Hyperion, a Vision*, which was undertaken by Keats late in 1819. In this the Greek *Mnemosyne* is changed into the Roman *Moneta*, who conveys the poet, in a trance, to the scene of Saturn's overthrow; but first she shows him how useless and miserable are the lives of those who are indifferent to the troubles of their fellow-men.

"None can usurp this height," returned the shade,
 "But those to whom the miseries of the world
 Are misery, and will not let them rest."

Keats shows in this that he was realizing his desire for a nobler life and a loftier theme, by pursuing which he might become

The mighty poet of the human heart,

and though he always conceived of the true poet as a prophet and seer he has evidently come to value the life of action and conduct above that of meditation and poetry, and condemns as selfish the merely artistic life he had been leading, for he is now preaching that actual contact and sympathy with human misery and sorrow are the only school for real insight."¹

In the re-cast of *Hyperion* Keats arrived at greater severity of style ; amongst other improvements he did away with the vocative O so frequently recurring in the first *Hyperion* and in *Endymion*. Take for example *Hyp.* I. 50, the lines—

Would come in these like accents ; O how frail
 To that large utterance of the early gods !
 Saturn, look up ! though wherefore poor old king ?
 I have no comfort for thee, no not one :
 I cannot say, O wherefore sleepest thou ?
 For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
 Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God.

In the Re-cast, the two O's are struck out, and the word "accents" becomes "accenting" ; and instead of "O wherefore" we have "Wherefore thus." This added *thus* causes the *thus*, in the next line but one to be changed to *so*, and then to prevent the repe-

¹ R. Bridges, *Introduction*, p. lii.

tition of *Wherefore* in lines 3 and 5, line 3 is altered to “ *and for what, poor lost king* ” ; *lost* being substituted for the hackneyed *poor old king*.¹

Of sonnets Keats wrote some sixty, of which twelve or thirteen are of great merit. That on the death of Leander is pre-eminent, as also his early one on Chapman's Homer and the last of all his writings, *Bright Star*.

The drama *Otho the Great* was written in collaboration with Brown, who found the incidents which Keats put into verse. He was disappointed at its being returned to him unread after it had been accepted, for like so many others his “ greatest ambition,” he said, was “ to write a few fine plays.”

All the magnificent work which is in the 1820 volume was so far in advance of his previous work that one can best think with wonder on what he might have gone on to, had life been granted him. Faults of taste might have been corrected and we should have had a larger body of good poetry from him, but it is not possible that he could ever have surpassed the lyrical beauty of his best Odes.

Shelley was only 30, and Byron 36 when he died ; Keats was but 25, and only four years of this short span had been occupied in writing. Happily he wrote fast and produced nearly all his great work in twenty months, between March 1818 and October 1819, before he had completed his twenty-fourth year. The first nine months of 1819 was his most productive time. Five of his six great Odes were written in the four months between January and June. That to *Autumn* was com-

¹ R. Bridges, *Introduction*, p. xlii.

posed in October, at Winchester, where Keats spent the last good days of his life. For in this very year of his marvellous poetic output he had much to contend with. His brother Tom, whom he nursed with constant care, had died of consumption in October 1818, and it was soon after this that he began to work at *Hyperion* and *St. Agnes Eve*. Then he had fallen under the spell of love, and had become engaged to Miss Fanny Brawne. She was not perhaps quite suited to him, though she nursed him tenderly through his last weeks in England. But his passion for her was incredibly violent, and an absolutely consuming flame. This, combined with urgent pecuniary difficulties—for his poetry was bringing him in neither money nor fame—and worst of all the wasting of his frame from the inroads of his fatal ailment, made a threefold burden under which a stronger man might well have sunk.

As the winter came on, his sufferings increased, and on February 3, 1820, he got a chill when riding on the outside of a coach. Brown, seeing how ill he was, got him quickly to bed. He coughed slightly, and called to Brown to bring a candle, and, after examining a drop of blood on the sheet, said with perfect calmness: "I know the colour of that blood, it is arterial blood; I cannot be deceived in that colour; that drop of blood is my death warrant; I must die."

Keats knew what he was talking about. He had not been at Guy's Hospital for nothing. He lived for twelve months, but it was a life in death. In a letter to his sister he says: "How astonishingly does the chance of leaving the world impress

a sense of its natural beauties upon us ! Like poor Falstaff, though I do not ‘ babble ’ I think of green fields, I muse with the greatest affection on every flower I have known from my infancy.”

The only work he did after this was the seeing through the press his 1820 volume, which came out in July. His wonderful lyric *La belle Dame sans Merci* was not included because Keats had let Leigh Hunt have it for his periodical, *The Indicator*. Hunt in return published in his August number an able and appreciative review of the volume, and Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* of the same month also noticed it favourably.

The first version of *La belle Dame* has been displaced in some editions by a revised version be inning—

O, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
but the first is far the best—

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms.

This gives, as Mr. Bridges points out, “ the keynote of romance and of aloofness from real life ; and the suggestion of armour is of the greatest value to the general colouring.”

Keats doubtless got his refrain in the fourth and the last line from W. Browne’s *Britannia’s Pastorals*, where we read—

Slide soft, ye silver floods,
And every spring,
Within the shady woods
Let no bird sing !

but the title is that of an old French chanson, of which a translation is attributed to Chaucer.

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

A BALLAD

I

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering ?
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

II

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone ?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

III

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

IV

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a fairy's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

V

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone ;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

VI

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A fairy's song.

VII

She found me roots of relish sweet
And honey wild, and manna-dew,

And sure in language strange she said—
“I love thee true.”

VIII

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept, and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild, wild eyes
With kisses four.

IX

And there she lulled me asleep,
And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide,
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill's side.

X

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried, “La Belle Dame Sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!”

XI

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

XII

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Before his book was out he had fresh attacks of hæmorrhage, and was taken in and tended with devoted care by the Leigh Hunts. In August he moved back to Hampstead, where the Brownes nursed him in their house, but the doctor had warned him against wintering in England. This came to Shelley's ears, and he wrote, urging him to come out and take up his abode with them at Pisa.

He replied doubtfully, but just then a companion turned up in the person of Joseph Severn, who had won the gold medal of the Royal Academy for an historical painting, and was going out to work in Rome. The two sailed in the *Maria Crowther* on September 18, 1820, but contrary winds detained them in the Channel for a fortnight, and it was after landing near Lulworth, on the Dorset coast, on September 28, that he wrote on board ship his last sonnet *Bright Star*, with its beautiful allusion to the sea washing the shores of the land he was leaving never to see again.

KEATS' LAST SONNET

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores.

Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

After a long and rough passage they reached Naples. Here Keats got another letter from Shelley praising the new volume, and especially *Hyperion*, and again urging him to come to Pisa, but he wished to stick to Severn. They reached Rome in November. In December Keats had another relapse, and for the next two months he suffered

greatly. He was nursed all the time most tenderly by Severn till his release came on February 23, 1821.

He was buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, near the pyramid of Caius Cestius. Severn now lies beside him, and Shelley's ashes, collected from the fire by Trelawney, are buried not far off. In April 1909 a Keats-Shelley memorial was opened by the King of Italy in the house in which Keats died, which has been acquired and properly furnished and dedicated to the memory of the two poets by their admirers in England and America. It contains books, photographs and MSS., many of them of great interest, and is a standing contradiction to the words Keats begged to have inscribed on his tomb. "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." So, in this beautiful resting place we leave him, having seen that he was a master of melody, and the poet above all things of the beauties of Nature. The moon first of all, and next to the moon the stars, the winds, the forests, the birds, the flowers, the glancing stream and the play of sunlight, all had a fascination for him and affected him intensely. The billowing of the wind through foliage or the sight of it passing in waves over a field of corn put him into an ecstasy of delight. Indeed Beauty in all forms he devoutly worshipped, and as the Beauty of Nature is his invariable resource for expressing the emotions of the soul he failed in the delineation of human passion, but in this same cause lies the secret of the spell that Greek Mythology exercised over him; the beauty of the human form taking to the Greek the place which the beauties of Nature held in Keats' mind. We have seen that he was

conscious almost from the first that he must get beyond descriptions of Nature to become truly great, and must portray the emotions of the human heart ; and, had he lived, he would probably have attained to this, but dying so young he never reached it and so falls short of perfection. But granting this, and in spite of his faults of style and taste, no one can doubt that he has written some of the loveliest masterpieces of English poetry. We have seen how much he draws from Chaucer, Spenser, Milton and Shakespeare, and again from Dryden and Wordsworth, and we may consider his place to be midway between the Elizabethan and the great Victorian poets. There never was a poet who did not admire Keats. Shelley's *Adonais* is the lovely lament of a brother poet for his untimely death,

The bloom whose petals, nipt before they blew,
Died on the promise of the fruit.

This is the pathetic part of it. All his work constantly growing in excellence throughout the short period of his poetic activity, but all finished before he was 25. And when we consider that much of this work is of supreme beauty we must all, I think, agree with the opinion expressed by Lord Tennyson that " had he lived he would have been a very great poet indeed, the first of us all."

WORDSWORTH

1770-1850

IN one of his pleasant letters about the poets he had known Aubrey de Vere writes : " I had been enthusiastically praising Byron's poetry, my father calmly replied, ' Wordsworth is the great poet of modern times.' Much surprised I asked, ' And what may his special merits be ? ' The answer was, ' They are various, as for instance depth, largeness, elevation, and, what is rare in Modern poetry, an *entire* purity ; in his noble *Laodamia* they are chiefly majesty and pathos.' A few weeks afterwards I chanced to take from the library shelves a volume of Wordsworth and it opened on *Laodamia*, and bound me to the spot till I had come to the end. As I read, a new world, hitherto unimagined, opened itself out, stretching far away into serene infinitude, . . . I had been translated into another planet of song, one with larger movements and a longer year. A wider conception of poetry had become mine, and the Byronian enthusiasm fell from me like a bond that is broken by being outgrown."

It is this elevation and largeness which is the chief characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry and gives us the feeling of reverence for the poet.

Born in 1770, there was nothing very remarkable

about his youth and upbringing. We have his own description of his life in the little school at Hawkshead in the Lake district, and his years at St. John's College, Cambridge, and also of his travels abroad when he came of age, and particularly of his visit to Paris, full of ardent enthusiasm for Liberty, at the time of the French revolution, and the change of opinion that subsequent events inspired.

He was seven and twenty before he took to writing poetry, as the main business of his life. His travels over, he had settled at last at Race-down, near Crewkerne, in *Dorset*, with his beloved sister Dorothy, who never afterwards left him. But in 1797 they moved to Alfoxden, in Somersetshire, so as to be near his friend S. T. Coleridge, then living at Nether Stowey. As a result of that friendship, in 1798 Wordsworth's first volume was published with the title *Lyrical Ballads*, a joint work which included Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*. After this they all went abroad; and it is worth noting that, for his time, Wordsworth was a great traveller. On December 21, 1799, they settled in Grasmere, as described in *The Recluse*, first in the humble little "Dove Cottage," once an inn with the sign of *The Dove and Olive Leaf*, now the property of the nation, and still in much the same state as when Wordsworth, and after him De Quincey, made it their home. Here Wordsworth lived till May 1808, and here almost all of his first-rate work was done. Hither, in 1802, he brought his bride, and in Grasmere and the next parish of Rydal he happily spent the remaining fifty years of his life, how happily his four charming

sonnets, called *Personal Talk*, tell us, amid "smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought." Fortunately he had had a little money left him, and their wants were small. Even now, in that delightful region, it is possible for cultivated people to live in the simplest way, and the Wordsworths were the very embodiment of "plain living and high thinking." But good as was his work, Wordsworth used to say that for many years his poetry never brought him in enough to buy his shoe-strings, though Byron and Scott were at this time making their thousands. So the £30 which the Bristol publisher gave him for his share in the *Lyrical Ballads*, and which he never recovered, was for a long time the only profit Wordsworth made by his verse.

It was at Cambridge, and between 1830 and 1840, that he attained his greatest popularity. This was due in great measure to the influence of Coleridge, though the death of Byron in 1824 and the fact that Scott had given up poetry for prose had in a measure cleared the way for him. By 1842, when Tennyson's two volumes came out, Wordsworth's fame was established ; but both at the Universities and elsewhere the younger poet certainly attracted a great part of the poetry-reading public from Wordsworth to himself. Of his contemporaries Coleridge was Wordsworth's chief friend, Tennyson was a great admirer of his poems and Wordsworth was very complimentary about Tennyson's. In 1845, at the time he was appointed Poet Laureate, he wrote to Professor Reed, "I saw Tennyson when I was in London several times. He is decidedly the first of our living poets and I hope

he will live to give the world still better things." This was before the publishing of *In Memoriam* or *Maud*. In expressing his hope that Tennyson might live, Wordsworth doubtless was thinking of the early death of Keats, Shelley and Byron at the ages respectively of 25, 30, and 36, not that he ever read much of their works, nor did he of Southey's, his predecessor in the Laureateship, and his friend and neighbour. Scott he loved, and Scott felt the worth of Wordsworth's poetry which he consistently praised before it had caught the public ear at all.

Wordsworth's school and college days are described in *The Prelude*, a long but interesting autobiographical poem extending to fourteen books, the 9th, 10th, and 11th of which are of special value as giving a description of what he saw in France at the time of the Great Revolution in 1792. This time was a crisis in Wordsworth's life. He went out full of enthusiasm for a great nation struggling for liberty and came back, after the September Massacres, disappointed and filled with pain and grief, and it was then that the companionship of his "dear, dear sister" the wonderful Dorothy, and the contemplation of Nature among the mountains of Westmorland led him back from the dark Vale of Melancholy to the sunlight, as he says in Book XI of *The Prelude*—

Then it was—

Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good!—

That the beloved sister in whose sight

Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice

Of sudden admonition—like a brook

That did but *cross* a lonely road and now

Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,

Companion never lost through many a league—
 Maintained for me a saving intercourse
 With my true self; for though bedimmed and changed
 Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
 Than as a clouded and a waning moon.
 She whispered still that brightness would return;
 She in the midst of all preserved me still
 A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
 And that alone, my office upon earth;
 And, lastly, as hereafter will be shown,
 If willing audience fail not, Nature's self,
 By all varieties of human love
 Assisted, let me back through opening day
 To those sweet counsels between head and heart,
 Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with
 peace,
 Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,
 Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now.

This "beloved sister" was his constant companion both before and after his marriage. They walked together all over the Lake District and through the Highlands, and it is interesting to notice how Wordsworth in several of his lyrics has reproduced word for word the picture she describes so well in her delightful Journals. She was for many years everything to him—

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
 And humble cares, and delicate fears;
 A heart the fountain of sweet tears;
 And love, and thought, and joy.

And not only did she find eyes and ears for her brother, but she gave him, through all the best years of her life, help in writing and copying, far greater in every way than he could have obtained from any number of ordinary secretaries or copyists, for was she not his "Sister, slave and inspirer." The following extracts from her Grasmere Journal will show what an exhausting effect composition

had upon the poet and what infinite labour his sister was always ready to bestow. The time is 1801 and 1802 when Wordsworth was at work on the early books of *The Excursion*, his name for the whole of which before publication was *The Pedlar*. When published the term "Pedlar" was discarded for "Wanderer."

Wednesday, Dec. 23, 1801. . . . "Mary" (Mrs. Wordsworth) "wrote out the Tales from Chaucer for Coleridge, William worked at the Ruined Cottage and made himself very ill. . . ."

Tuesday, Jan. 26, 1802. "We sate till we were both tired, for William wrote out part of his poem, and endeavoured to alter it, and so made himself ill. I copied out the rest for him. . . ."

Monday, Feb. 1. "William worked hard at the Pedlar, and tired himself. . . . I baked bread."

Tuesday, Feb. 2. "William worked at the Pedlar. . . ."

Thursday, Feb. 4. "William thought a little about the Pedlar."

Friday, Feb. 5. "Sat up late at the Pedlar."

Sunday, Feb. 7. "William had a bad night, and was working at his poem. We sate by the fire, and did not walk, but read the Pedlar, thinking it done; but lo! W. could find fault with one part of it—it was uninteresting, and must be altered, poor William!"

Wednesday, Feb. 10. "We read the first part of the poem and were delighted with it, but William afterwards got to some ugly place, and went to bed tired out. . . ."

Thursday, Feb. 11. "William sadly tired, and working at the Pedlar."

Friday, Feb. 12. "I re-copied the Pedlar ; but poor William all the time at work. . . . We sate a long time with the window unclosed, and almost finished writing the Pedlar, but poor William wore himself out and me with labour. Went to bed at 12 o'clock."

Saturday, Feb. 13. "It snowed a little. Still at work at the Pedlar, altering and refitting. William read part of his *Recluse* aloud to me."

Sunday, Feb. 14. "William left me at work altering some passages of the Pedlar, and went into the orchard."

Sunday, Feb. 28. "William very ill ; employed himself with the Pedlar."

Friday Morning. ". . . I wrote the Pedlar and finished it. . . ."

The poem was now laid aside, the first two books being finished, and was not taken up again until they had moved, in 1808, from *Dove Cottage* with its orchard, the scene of so much of his best writing, to *Allan Bank* on the other side of Grasmere, a new house, of which Wordsworth was the first occupant and where he was nearly driven wild by the smoky chimneys.

It should be noted that Wordsworth was given to making up his characters from what he had noticed in two or three different persons. This is true of Matthew, and of the Wanderer in *The Excursion* ; and Margaret in Book I, the poet himself tells us, is composite, made of observations in Somerset and Dorset and placed in Lake Country surroundings. Even her cottage there is described as thatched, and in Spring the banks are gay with primroses, while her garden in

Summer is over-grown with thrift and bindweed while the fields outside are clothed with wheat ; all this is foreign to Westmorland, but natural to Somerset, while—

that bright weed

The yellow stonecrop, suffered to take root
Along the window's edge,

is a touch of pure Westmoreland, to which Book II introduces us, and the rest of the poem keeps us among the fells and in the valleys, the two being at times mixed together so that the lonely Blea Tarn and Grasmere Church, the Metropolis of the district, are drawn into one picture. For though the poet took his pictures from Nature, he did not consider it necessary always to paint them just as he saw them.

The Prelude is the first part and *The Excursion* the second part of what was meant to be a philosophical poem called *The Recluse*, and which occupied him from 1795 to 1814. It was intended to contain his views on Man, Nature and Society, but it was never completed. It sounds dull, and much of it is rather dull reading, but it abounds with passages which, if we take Matthew Arnold's definition of poetry as "The perfect speech of man in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth," must be called poetry of the highest order. Still, it is not in this, the longest of his poems, that Wordsworth's chief claim as a poet and a great poet rests. Rather is it in his *Laodamia*, or his great *Odes*, in some of his magnificent *Sonnets*, in *Tintern Abbey*, and still more in some of his Narrative poems such as *Michael*, in his lovely lyrical

poems, notably *The Solitary Reaper*, and in his Reflective poem *The Fountain*, that we have Wordsworth at his best.

To quote two or three, we have in his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*—

The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose ;
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare ;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair ;
The sunshine is a glorious birth ;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

And again—

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting ;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar :
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home :
Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows
He sees it in his joy ;
The Youth, who daily farther from the East
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended ;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

In *The Fountain*—

Down to the vale this water steers,
How merrily it goes !
'Twill murmur on a thousand years,
And flow as now it flows.

And here, on this delightful day,
I cannot choose but think
How oft, a vigorous man, I lay
Beside this Fountain's brink.

My eyes are dim with childish tears,
My heart is idly stirred,
For the same sound is in my ears
Which in those days I heard.

Thus fares it still in our decay :
And yet the wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away
Than what it leaves behind.

The Blackbird in the summer trees,
The Lark upon the hill,
Let loose their carols when they please,
Are quiet when they will.

With Nature never do *they* wage
A foolish strife ; they see
A happy youth, and their old age
Is beautiful and free :

But we are pressed by heavy laws ;
And often, glad no more,
We wear a face of joy, because
We have been glad of yore.

And among the Lyrics—

I wandered lonely as a Cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden Daffodils ;
Beside the Lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay ;
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee :—
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company ;
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought :

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the Daffodils.

The beautiful lines about his wife—

She was a Phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight ;
A lovely Apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament ;
Her eyes are stars of Twilight fair ;
Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair ;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful Dawn ;
A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A Spirit, yet a Woman too !
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty ;
Sweet records, promises as sweet ;
A Creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food ;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine ;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveller between life and death ;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill ;
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command,
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of an angel light.

And *The Solitary Reaper*, sometimes called *The Highland Lass*—

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass !
Reaping and singing by herself ;
Stop here, or gently pass !
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain ;
O listen ! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chant
So sweetly to reposing bands
Of Travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian Sands :
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings ?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago :
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day ?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again !

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending ;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending ;—
I listened till I had my fill,
And when I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Of The Sonnets several are of the very highest order. Some, like that to *Wansfell*, appeal only to those who know the spot, but to them few can appeal more strongly.

Of the Ecclesiastical Sonnets, one called *Persuasion* is remarkable.

Man's life is like a sparrow, mighty king !
 That—while at banquet with your chiefs you sit
 Housed near a blazing fire—is seen to flit
 Safe from the wintry tempest. Fluttering
 Here did it enter ; there on hasty wing,
 Flies out, and passes on from cold to cold ;
 But whence it came we know not, nor behold
 Whither it goes. Even such that transient Thing,
 The human Soul ; not utterly unknown
 While in the Body lodged, her warm abode ;
 But from what world She came, what woe or weal
 On her departure waits, no tongue hath shown ;
 This mystery if the Stranger can reveal,
 His be a welcome cordially bestowed.

Among the best of all we should certainly number
 that *On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic*—

Once did She hold the gorgeous East in fee ;
 And was the safeguard of the West : the worth
 Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
 Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.
 She was a Maiden City, bright and free ;
 No guile seduced, no force could violate ;
 And when She took unto herself a Mate,
 She must espouse the everlasting Sea.
 And what if she had seen those glories fade,
 Those titles vanish, and that strength decay ;
 Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
 When her long life hath reached its final day ;
 Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
 Of that which once was great, is passed away.

And that *Composed upon the beach near Calais*—

It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free ;
 The holy time is quiet as a Nun
 Breathless with adoration ; the broad sun
 Is sinking down in its tranquillity ;
 The gentleness of heaven is on the sea !
 Listen ! the mighty Being is awake,
 And doth with his eternal motion make
 A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
 Dear Child ! dear Girl ! that walkest with me here,
 If thou appear'st untouched by solemn thought,
 Thy nature is not therefore less divine :

Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year ;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

And Upon Westminster Bridge—

Earth has not anything to show more fair ;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty :
This City now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky ;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill ;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !
The river glideth at his own sweet will :
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;
And all that mighty heart is lying still !

All those were written in 1802, and they can only
be surpassed by that magnificent one of 1806—

The world is too much with us ; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers :
Little we see in Nature that is ours ;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon !
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon ;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers ;
For this, for every thing, we are out of tune ;
It moves us not.—Great God ! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn ;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

The last line has a reference to Spenser's lines in
Colin Clout's come home again.

Of them the Shepherd which hath charge in chief
Is Triton blowing loud his wreathed horn.

All this is of the highest quality and Wordsworth has written much, if not quite as good, still of very great excellence, while in many poems which are not by any means his best, we find imbedded such fine passages as—

Brooding above the fierce confederate storms
Of sorrow, barricadoed evermore
Within the walls of cities.

From *The Recluse*.

Or again, on Newton's statue in Trinity Chapel, Cambridge—

The marble index of a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of thought alone ;—

and lines of such gentle pathos as—

And she forgotten in the quiet grave.

Ex. I. 514.

Or

While Man grows old, and dwindles or decays ;
And countless generations of Mankind
Depart ; and leave no vestige where they trod.

Ex. IV. 762.

And in all his writings he excels in his descriptions of Nature, as when he speaks of—

The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

Brougham Castle.

Wordsworth from his earliest years was strongly influenced by his natural surroundings. Mountains, streams and lakes were all taken into his heart and reproduced over and over again in his poems which reflect at one time the great beauty of lake

and vale, at another the majesty and solemnity of the everlasting hills.

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Think not of any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;

and while the smaller things of the landscape, "Rocks and stones and trees" and mountain mists are noted and described in some charming lyric full of the joy of life, in his Verses *To May* he has

Lo! streams that April could not check
Are patient of thy rule;
Gurgling in foamy water-break,
Loitering in glassy pool;
By thee, thee only, could be sent
Such gentle mists as glide,
Curling with unconfirmed intent,
On that green mountain's side.

The voices of the heights and the tempests are reproduced in lofty or solemn lines full of deep thought and feeling in which the poet speaks his message to mankind.

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep.

And as in Nature so with humanity Wordsworth notices and gives the full value to the small actions of which life is mainly composed.

To "that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love."

I have not dwelt on the simplicity of Wordsworth's language, it is evident to all; and to both

Wordsworth and Burns our thanks are due more than to any others for re-introducing that simple language into poetry which since Chaucer's time had been less and less in vogue. They both of them also exhibit a remarkable insight into the dignity of common speech and common things.

Concerning his style we may say that Wordsworth had no special style of his own ; of course he had studied the great poets too well not to catch something of it from them, and his poetic power of describing in the simplest words some scene, action, or thought, with absolute fidelity and often with the finest pathos is peculiarly his own or shared with Burns alone, for instance in the *Solitary Reaper*.

Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides,

and

For old unhappy far-off things
And battles long ago ;

or again the line in *Michael*—

And never lifted up a single stone :

these are among Wordsworth's most characteristic forms of expression. No words could be simpler, but read the lines with their context, and then how fine they are ! how sonorous ! how pathetic ! and besides the pathos his lines have to a remarkable degree the power of making the reader reflect, and of raising him out of himself to a higher plane, where, as it was with Aubrey de Vere, " A New World opens itself out before him, stretching far

away into serene infinitude." This is the *elevation* I spoke of as characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry. For a good instance of what I mean let us turn to the lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey in 1798, at the very beginning of his best decade. They describe his feeling for Nature as a youth and again as a man.

The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, or any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed, for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear, both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

But it is not only for the elevation or for the unique beauty of many of his poems that we rank Wordsworth so high ; oftener it is for the extraordinary power that he has of feeling the joy in Nature and in the simple affections and duties of human life, and the equally remarkable power he has of expressing it to us and making us all feel it too. He wrote, as Keats wished to write, on human life, that is to say on How to live ; other poets have addressed themselves to this great topic, but " Wordsworth's superiority," says Mr. Arnold, " lies in the fact that he deals with more of life than they do ; and deals with life as a whole more powerfully."

We are not suggesting that Wordsworth's poems are all on the same high level. It may well be true, as has been said of him by a good judge, that he would have been greater if he had written only half as much, and it is almost amazing that a poet who when inspired could be so great, should when the inspiration left him be able and apparently content to write so weakly, or with such ponderosity. But allowing all this, still even the lengthy *Excursion*, in which occur such prosy lines as " perhaps it is not he but some one else," is full of interest and full also of magnificent passages both melodious and profound, and—what Mr. Matthew Arnold most insists on—" he has left us so large a body of poetry, much of it of the highest order, that though Gray or Burns or Keats may all have written single poems of equal, or some might think greater, merit—the very quantity of good work left by Wordsworth, when you have cleared away the poetical baggage

that encumbers him, is so ample, that it is by the great body of powerful and significant work which remains to him after every reduction and deduction has been made, that Wordsworth's superiority is proved. Dante, Shakespeare, Molière and Milton and even Goethe are altogether larger and more splendid luminaries in the poetical heaven than Wordsworth, but I know not where else among the moderns we are to find his superior."¹ For all this Wordsworth is not popular; the thoughtful readers of English poetry can have no doubt of his greatness, but the number of thoughtful readers is not as large as it should be. It is easy to say that Wordsworth's poems are too prosy, too didactic, or too philosophical; but how few of those who say these things have really studied him and qualified themselves to pass an opinion.

From what we have said it is clear that it is a wise plan on the part of those who wish to help forward the study of Wordsworth, to make a selection of his poems, indeed no poet profits more from this. Mr. Stopford Brooke has lately brought out a somewhat large volume of selections, admirably chosen and prefaced by a valuable introduction; but it is difficult to surpass the little book of Golden Treasury size brought out more than thirty years ago by Mr. Matthew Arnold, in which the selected poems are prefaced by a critical essay written with the fullest knowledge, which can be unreservedly commended to Wordsworth students. In the essay Arnold expresses his opinion that Wordsworth's own division of his poems into poems of the fancy, poems of the ima-

¹ Preface to *Poems of Wordsworth*, M. Arnold.

gination, poems of sentiment and reflexion, etc., is unsatisfactory and difficult, and has not the self-evident propriety of the old Greek classification into Epic, Dramatic, Lyric, etc., and certainly the author's own grouping is needlessly repellent. A chronological grouping is often used now which is better, and gives the student information which is of value. For his work is his life, he lived as he wrote, and those who get to know his works know also how much they get from them and, comparing him with all the previous English poets, they will be ready to endorse Mr. Arnold's opinion when he says—

“Chaucer is anterior; and on other grounds, too, he cannot well be brought into the comparison. But taking the roll of our chief poetical names, besides Shakespeare and Milton, from the age of Elizabeth downwards, and going through it — Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, Cowper, Burns, Coleridge, Campbell, Moore, Byron, Shelley, Keats (I mention those only who are dead)—I think it certain that Wordsworth's name deserves to stand, and will finally stand, above them all.”

To this we will only add Wordsworth's own feeling about his works, viz., that “they will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, and will in their degree be efficacious in making men wiser, better and happier.”

NOTE

The following remarks on the rustic figures in Wordsworth's poems have been communicated to

me by a literary friend in Rydal, Mrs. A. M. Harris, and I gladly avail myself of her permission to print them ; for though much has been written of Wordsworth's poetry in relation to Nature, little has been said of the characteristic human figures to which his hills and vales form the appropriate background.

The "statesmen" or yeoman farmers of the Westmoreland and Cumberland dales were rapidly dying out in Wordsworth's time, and very pathetic were the struggles they made to keep their little holdings and their independence, both of them to be at last given up from stress of circumstances, for they seldom had sufficient capital to tide over two or three consecutive bad seasons. A few of these "statesmen" still remain, and, go where you will, all the world over, finer men or grander characters can nowhere be found or women better-looking and more capable ; a fact which only makes one more deeply regret their disappearance in many cases from the district altogether. The labourers and shepherds and others are, however, still there just as in Wordsworth's days and are all embraced in the term "Dalesmen."

"In Wordsworth's poetry, which seems to present to us at first sight only vast spaces of wild inanimate Nature, gradually the human interest reveals itself. Figures unassuming and unadorned take their quiet place in a fitting foreground. No rattle of armour, no twang of the lute, no glitter of spears, no waving of plumes herald their arrival. We become aware of them ; that is all. As the rocks detach themselves from the hillside on which they lie scattered, as the sheep become distinct to our perception from the stones which they so much resemble, so these men of the dales are re-

vealed as an integral part of the scene we look upon. And man, as so revealed to us, is little indeed ; a pigmy in a giant world of rocks and streams clad in garments which assimilate themselves to the materials among which he works—earth-coloured, sober-hued—he toils through the seasons and faces the tempests undisturbed by any but the simplest ambitions and the most primitive emotions : yet, even so, devoid of ornament and stripped of romantic accessories, he is grand in his simplicity. Like the figures in the painter Millet's scenes of daily toil, Wordsworth's peasants represent for us the still sad music of humanity, its littleness and the immensities surrounding it, its privations, its toil, its solitude, but never its insignificance. The pigmy among the giants is touched with the divine fire of consciousness, is lifted up and separated from ignoble things, by steadfast courage and patient endurance, by love and by constancy.

Beaten down by suffering, unvisited by any radiant hope, yet seldom complaining and frequently contented, Wordsworth's dalesmen accept life at the hands of God with heads bowed in reverent acquiescence and hands ready to toil to the end. Michael at the sheepfold, The Angler by Grasmere Lake, The Schoolmaster, Matthew, the afflicted Margaret, and last but not least the Leech-gatherer by the lonely pool, vindicate the dignity of humanity in the lowly ways of life. The Poet so treats them that it is easy to link them in our minds as he did the leech-gatherer, with the memory of great dead poets. In dealing with these simple lives Wordsworth rises to great heights of poetry. From *The Leech-gatherer* we garner the

“mighty poets in their misery dead” and the whole wonderful meditation on genius and human life.

From *The Angler* we have—

The Lady of the Mere
Sole sitting by the shore of old romance.

From *Matthew*—

She seemed as happy as a wave
That dances on the sea.

From *Margaret*—

’Tis falsely said
That there was ever intercourse
Between the living and the dead,
For surely then I should have sight
Of him I wait for day and night,
With love and longings infinite.

which is a kind of compendium of *In Memoriam*. Add to these the entrancing picture of the “Highland Girl” in “The Solitary Reaper,” to which we owe the lines—

Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides ;

and

Old unhappy far-off things,
And battles long ago.

Lines which breathe the very spirit—the mystic, incommunicable, unexplainable spirit—of poetry ; and which are instinct with that magical harmony of which Keats and Coleridge are the most perfect modern exponents.”

LONGFELLOW

1807-1882

WHEN the *Mayflower* pinnacle discharged its cargo of sturdy Puritans at Cape Cod in 1620, Shakespeare had been dead but four years and Milton was a boy of 12. Among these Puritans was one John Alden and a Yorkshire lass called Priscilla Mullens. Their story is told in Longfellow's poem, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. One hundred and fifty years later a descendant of these two was living in Portland, Maine, one General Peleg Wadsworth, and his eldest daughter Zilpah, one of eleven, became the mother of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Her husband, Stephen Longfellow, was a barrister whose ancestor five generations back had emigrated from Yorkshire and settled in Newbury, Massachusetts. So on both sides Longfellow had Yorkshire blood in his veins. He was the second son and was born at Portland, February 27, 1807, just over a hundred years ago, and two years before the birth of Alfred Tennyson. From his earliest days, he was fond of reading, his favourite book being Washington Irving's *Sketchbook*. In later life he wrote, "The old fascination remains about it, and whenever I open its pages I open also that mysterious door which leads back into the haunted chambers of youth." As a boy, twice

every Sunday he went to the Unitarian Church, carrying in winter his mother's foot-stove, in summer her nosegay. His first attempt at verse was "to order," when he was nine. The school-teacher said, "You can write words, can't you?" "Yes." "You can put them together?" "Yes." "Then take your slate, go out behind the school-house, look about you and write me something about what you see. That will be a composition." He went out and saw a fine turnip growing by the barn, and within the prescribed half-hour he took his master a few verses on it. His first published verses were on an heroic encounter between the Whites and the Indians. For he wrote sixteen lines called *The Battle of Lovell's Pond* and sent them to the *Portland Argus*, but as they did not appear he boldly went and asked the Editor to return him the MS. and sent it to the rival paper *The Gazette*, and they came out on November 17, 1820, when the boy was 13 years old.

From Portland Academy he went with his brother Stephen to Bowdoin College at Brunswick, Maine, where Nathaniel Hawthorne (then spelt Hathorne) was also a student. All things in America were in their infancy then, whence it came about that one of the Trustees being charmed by the lad's translation of a bit from the Latin poet Horace, recommended him for the proposed Chair of *Modern Languages*! This was soon after he had taken his degree in 1825. Next year he started on a three years' tour to Europe, to study modern languages and literature in France, Spain, Italy and Germany, and his industry is attested by the excellence of his translations from the Italian, Spanish, and German.

In 1831 he married Mary Storer Potter, of Portland. The success of his book called *Outré Mers*, an account of his pilgrimage beyond the sea, published in 1833, was such that in 1834 he was made Smith Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard, to succeed Ticknor, with a salary of 1,500 dollars, in consequence of which next year he again visited Europe, this time with his wife. He went to London, Sweden, where he learnt Finnish, Denmark, Holland and Switzerland. In Holland his wife died. He has some feeling verses on her in his short poem, *Footsteps of Angels*, and he speaks of this and all his grief, and also of the new light which came into his life when he met Miss Appleton eight months later, in his book *Hyperion*, which is largely autobiographical. In 1839, the year of his publishing *Hyperion*, he began to write poetry as the vocation of his life. In 1842 he made a third visit to Europe, chiefly to England and Germany, and on his return in 1843 he married Frances Elizabeth Appleton as his second wife, by whom he had two sons and two daughters. She was burnt to death in 1861 from a drop of burning wax falling on her dress whilst she was making some seals to amuse her children.

In 1848 his daughter Fanny, aged 5, died ; his father in 1849, his mother in 1851. In 1859, having an assured income from his writing, he resigned the Harvard professorship.

In 1868 he again came to England and had an interview with the Queen. Tennyson told me how he had had a visit from him and found him a most pleasant good fellow " but " (he added) " of course not a great poet."

In 1882, March 24, he died at Cambridge, Massachusetts, at the age of 75. His lucky election to the Chair of Modern Languages at Bowdoin really decided his career as a literary man. His father wanted him to be a lawyer. He himself rather inclined to farming and at 17 he writes to his father: "In thinking to make a lawyer of me, I think you thought more partially than justly. I do not for my own part imagine that such a coat would suit me. I hardly think that nature designed me for the bar, or the pulpit, or the dissecting-room. I am altogether in favour of the farmer's life. Do keep the farmer's boots for me." A few months later he wrote, "The fact is, I most eagerly aspire after eminence in literature," a fortnight later, "of Divinity, medicine and law I should choose the last. Whatever I do study ought to be engaged in with all my soul for I *will be eminent* in something."

His name is bound up with *Hiawatha*, of which 100,000 copies were sold in two years. He wrote a good deal of poetry, and in spite of the hexameter metre which is not quite suited to the English language and of which he is not a consummate master, his longest poem, *Evangeline*, is his greatest work. It is full of feeling and can be read with interest throughout. *Miles Standish* is in the same metre.

The closing lines of *Evangeline* will serve as a sample of Longfellow's hexameters—

Still stands the forest primeval; but far away from its
shadow
Side by side, in their nameless graves, the lovers are
sleeping.

Under the humble walls of the little Catholic churchyard,
 In the heart of the city, they lie, unknown and unnoticed.
 Daily the tides of life go ebbing and flowing beside them,
 Thousands of throbbing hearts, where theirs are at rest
 and for ever,
 Thousands of aching brains, where theirs are no longer
 busy,
 Thousands of toiling hands, where theirs have ceased from
 their labours,
 Thousands of weary feet, where theirs have completed
 their journey.

Another pretty specimen of the metre is the following—

Ships that pass in the night and speak each other in pass-
 ing,
 Only a signal shown, and a distant voice in the darkness,
 So on the ocean of life we pass and speak one another—
 Only a look and a voice, then darkness again and a silence.

But he was happiest in his little well known bits
 like *The Village Blacksmith* and *The Psalm of Life*
 and in *The Slave's Dream* with its splendid run
 and wonderful pathos.

He has some exceptionally fine lines in many of
 his sonnets, notably the poem called *The Two
 Rivers* ; and the following which is called *Nature*
 seems to me to be one of the great sonnets of the
 world's literature.

NATURE

As a fond mother, when the day is o'er,
 Leads by the hand her little child to bed,
 Half willing, half reluctant to be led,
 And leave his broken playthings on the floor.
 Still gazing at them through the open door,
 Nor wholly reassured and comforted
 By promises of others in their stead
 Which though more splendid may not please him more ;
 So Nature deals with us and takes away
 Our playthings one by one, and by the hand

Leads us to rest so gently, that we go,
Scarce knowing if we wished to go or stay,
Being too full of sleep to understand
How far the unknown transcends the what we know.

The metre and the style of *Hiawatha* he copied from the Finnish Epic *Kalevala*, it is in unrhymed trochaics, four trochees to a line.

The secret of his great success as a poet in America is that he wrote for the people. In England his poems attract the young, and his mission in America where all was young, was to give a nation of children a taste for poetry.

The life of the early settlers was very narrow, and their lines of thought ran in a severe groove, but it was by books that they could connect themselves with the poetic and historic past, and books they were ready to devour. Thus a poetry which was simple, direct and human, full of the plain and strenuous morality—the softened and sweetened distillation of the grim old Calvinistic code—which was still demanded and cherished by public opinion, a poetry at once lofty and homely, was just what met their needs. It expressed the feelings of the ordinary man with an added insight and an aptness which sometimes amounts to genius, also it was a poetry simply religious, and full of perfect phrases, mixed up with blundering metaphors and weak-kneed commonplaces, but with frequent vivid flashes of high truth, and it at once took the heart of a people who were anxious to admire and not trained to the point of criticism, otherwise they could not have received *Excelsior* with such unanimous acclaim. Its grammatical blunder is best explained by the history of the

poem. Longfellow took up a paper with the seal of the New York state, a shield with a rising sun and the motto *Excelsior*, and at once made a draft of the poem.

Longfellow's matter and manner are more European than American. He gathered up the romance of European poetry and set it to simple English song. His love of the sea is one of his strongest characteristics and comes out so pre-eminently in his poem *The Building of the Ship* that it is hard to say whether the sea or the ship is the central influence of this which is the most American and perhaps also the most poetical of all his poems. There is no gainsaying the fact that he has had a great influence as a writer ; and though neither profound nor highly imaginative, has been of much service to his own and the rising generation, and in nothing more so than in the foreign culture and that breath of the Middle Ages which is felt as the distinguishing mark of so many of his writings, and was Longfellow's best gift to the American people.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

1822-1888

MATTHEW ARNOLD was the eldest son of Dr. Arnold of Rugby. He had a distinguished career at Oxford, being Scholar of Balliol, Newdigate prizeman and Fellow of Oriel. He wrote more in prose than in verse, and in both his tone is often contemptuous because he saw how culture was impeded by what he called the Philistinism of the middle class in England, and often sad because, looking round he saw and seemed to dwell more persistently on the evil than on the good in the world, feeling the trouble of humanity rather than its joy. But he was not unsuccessful ; for he spoke to those who were battling with fate, and certainly helped them to keep themselves unsubdued by evil, and to men of intelligence he spoke with power so that his judgment always had weight.

He grew up, it must be remembered, in troublous times intellectually, when the criticism of German scholars had a very disturbing influence on thoughtful men at Oxford just starting on life's journey. But from the scepticism thereby occasioned he "emerged" like the Oxus river in his famous poem and taught both in his verse and still more in his prose writings that faith in God and in right conduct was the true foundation of life's action.

But the state of mental perplexity concerning the problem of life, whilst it lasted, tinged his poetry with sadness: take for instance *Resignation*, *Empedocles*, *Dover Beach*; *Requiescat*, *a Question*, and *A Summer Night*, are sad but full of beauty; and it is this tendency to sadness which makes him so much greater in elegy than in any other form of verse. His genius, we are told, seemed to be at its ease when writing elegy, such as *The Scholar Gipsy*, the *Memorial Verses to Wordsworth*, and *Thyrsis*, the latter about Arthur Clough, a brother poet and also a Rugby and Oxford man though a little Arnold's senior. *Rugby Chapel* is full of interest.

It has been said that he was, in his verse, too self-conscious and too didactic, but in these exquisite elegiac poems there is a classic beauty, a pure loveliness and a melody hardly found in any writer since Spenser wrote his *Epithalamion*. Classical Matthew Arnold was bound to be. Homer, Sophocles, Theocritus and Virgil were his poetic godfathers. His first volume of poems came out in 1829 when he was 27 and contained such fine work as *The Forsaken Merman*, *Mycerinus*, *Resignation*, and his famous sonnet on Shakespeare. In the preface to the 1853 volume, which contained most of his earlier and anonymous poems of 1849 and 1852 with others added, he says that the eternal objects of poetry are human actions, and the most excellent actions are those which appeal most powerfully to the human affections. It signifies nothing whether the actions are ancient or modern; but he adds of poets that, "If they are endeavouring to practise any art, they remember

the plain and simple proceedings of the old artists, who attained their grand results by penetrating themselves with some noble and significant action, not by inflating themselves with a belief in the pre-eminent importance and greatness of their own times. They do not talk of their mission, nor of interpreting their age, nor of the coming poet ; all this, they know, is the mere delirium of vanity ; their business is not to praise their age, but to afford to the men who live in it the highest pleasure which they are capable of feeling. If asked to afford this by means of subjects drawn from the age itself, they ask what special fitness the present age has for supplying them : they are told that it is an era of progress, an age commissioned to carry out the great ideas of industrial development and social amelioration. They reply that with all this they can do nothing ; that the elements they need for the exercise of their art are great actions, calculated powerfully and delightfully to affect what is permanent in the human soul ; that so far as the present age can supply such actions, they will gladly make use of them ; but that an age wanting in moral grandeur can with difficulty supply such, and an age of spiritual discomfort with difficulty be powerfully and delightfully affected by them. And he asserts that for himself " in the sincere endeavour to learn and practise, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed to myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients."

Accordingly we find Matthew Arnold taking some of the great stories of the past for his poems. The

Greek story of *Merope*, the Eastern tale of *Sohrab and Rustum*, the Celtic *Tristram and Iseult* and the Norse *Balder Dead*.

But to him, as to us, the ancients really mean the Greeks ; and accordingly in his grand epic *Sohrab and Rustum* we find a wealth of Homeric similes which in an oriental poem make a curious mixture. The story is a most pathetic one, and beautifully told, full of intense feeling and illuminated by beautiful passages descriptive of Nature. In *Tristram and Iseult* we feel, perhaps, that the story of Merlin and Vivian dragged in at the end is somewhat out of place. But read it side by side with Swinburne's poem of the same name and how much finer it is in conception and in tone !

Of other fine poems in the 1853 volume we should mention the *Strayed Reveller*, the *Church of Brou*, *The Scholar Gipsy*, which counts among his very best productions, and the *Forsaken Merman*, one of the most charming and melodious poems ever written, of which Tennyson once said, in my hearing, " I would have given a good deal to have written that." *Westminster Abbey*, written on Arthur Stanley's death, and his poems on the death of his brother, bear witness to his affectionate nature. His genuine love of animals is manifested in his latest poems, and of its kind what can be better than the well-known *Geists Grave* ?

There are many fine passages in the poems ; but high as we should rank the *Merman*, *Westminster Abbey* and *Sohrab and Rustum*, we should give the palm among all his writings to *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis*. In both of these Oxford poems as also in *Dover Beach*, he gives us those clear bits of natural

description which are so accurate and so pictorial. True, that Nature with him, as with Tennyson, was the Nature of Modern Science acting in obedience to laws, and he loves to contrast her calm and settled modes with the hurry and turmoil of human life. Yet, as in Tennyson too, his beautiful language and his faculty for hitting on just the right epithet when describing natural objects, and the exquisite tenderness for Oxford in the pastoral poems, give a charm and a feeling to his verse which mark him as one of England's real poets.

His tender feeling shows in many of his poems in such lines as—

Mild o'er her grave ye mountains shine !
Gently by his ye waters glide !
To that in you which is divine
They were allied ;

and in his well-known *Memorial Verses* on Wordsworth.

His excellent choice of words, in the famous line from *Obermann Once More*—

The East bow'd low before the blast
In patient deep disdain,
She let the legions thunder past
And plunged in thought again,

or again, "The unplumbed salt estranging sea" and the description of Sophocles, "who saw life steadily and saw it whole." While for a beautiful picture straight from Nature I don't know where in any poet we can find a description of a summer evening to approach the opening lines of *Bacchanalia* or *The New Age*—

The evening comes, the fields are still,
The tinkle of the thirsty rill,

Unheard all day, ascends again ;
 Deserted is the half-mown plain,
 Silent the swaths ! the ringing wain,
 The mowers' cry, the dogs' alarms
 All housed within the sleeping farms !
 The business of the day is done,
 The last-left haymaker is gone.
 And from the thyme upon the height
 And from the elder blossom white
 And pale dog roses in the hedge,
 And from the mint plant in the sedge,
 In puffs of balm the night air blows
 The perfume which the day foregoes.
 And on the pure horizon far,
 See paling with the first-born star
 The liquid sky above the hill !
 The evening comes, the fields are still.

He was fond of writing poems without rhyme such as *Consolation*, *The Future*, *Rugby Chapel* and *Haworth Churchyard*, and in these too his descriptions of Nature and natural objects are remarkable for their accuracy and their beauty. Witness the little vignettes of the Yorkshire Moors in *Haworth Churchyard* and the simile of the dying eagle and her unconscious mate in that fine and pathetic poem *Sohrab and Rustum* in which more than any other he shows his mastery of blank verse. The poem begins with a picture of the Oxus river at dawn and ends with the same by starlight—

And a cold fog with night
 Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,

* * *

And Rustum and his son were left alone.
 But the majestic river floated on,
 Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
 Into the frosty starlight, and there moved
 Rejoicing, through the hushed Chorasmian waste,
 Under the solitary moon.

His longest poems are the dramatic *Merope* and

Empedocles on Etna, the latter perhaps the most characteristic of all his writings, full of fine thoughts and studded with notable lyrics.

In the *Buried Life* he lays stress on the solitude of the human soul, a subject which he frequently alludes to, but perhaps, as Mr. F. Bickley in his little volume in the *Life and Poetry* series points out, the Greek precept, "Know thyself," is the main motive of this fine poem, which ends with these touching lines—

Only—but this is rare—

When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafen'd ear
Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd,

A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again :
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.
A man becomes aware of his life's flow
And hears its winding murmur, and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.
And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, Rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.

And then he thinks he knows
The Hills where his life rose,
And the Sea where it goes.

This tells us that love alone, and that rarely, can show a man what he really is. So deeply buried out of sight, or locked in his own bosom is a man's own personality.

Along with this poem we should read *Self-Dependence*, in which an appeal is made to Nature to calm the distracted mind and teach it to be itself.

Resolve to be thyself : and know, that he
Who finds himself, loses his misery.

Finally, in the poem *Morality* we go a step further and find that the effort man makes brings him a reward even higher than any that Nature can bestow, for Nature needs no effort and uses none.

There is no effort on *my* brow—
I do not strive, I do not weep.
I rush with the swift spheres, and glow
In joy, and, when I will, I sleep.
Yet that severe, that earnest air,
I saw, I felt it once—but where ?

I knew not yet the gauge of Time,
Nor wore the manacles of Space.
I felt it in some other clime—
I saw it in some other place.
—'Twas when the heavenly house I trod,
And lay upon the breast of God.

Like all great poets, Matthew Arnold was a preacher, and an attractive one, for he was absolutely free from cant, and always transparently honest, hence many cultivated men have declared that they got more good from his poems than from any other author living or dead.

D. G. ROSSETTI

1828-1882

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI was three parts Italian, being English only through his mother's mother, who was a Miss Pierce and married Gaetano Polidori; both his grandfathers were literary men but neither of them artists. Dante Gabriel, born 1828, was the second of four children, Maria being the eldest and the two younger ones were William and Christina. As a boy he went to King's College School but left at 15 and took to the study of painting. At the age of 20 he joined the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which consisted of four, himself and Millais, Holman Hunt, and Woolner, and later James Collinson and William Rossetti, F. Stephen and W. H. Deverill, through whom Dante Rossetti made acquaintance with Miss Siddal, a girl with a wonderful abundance of red hair who was sitting to Deverill as a model. She was the daughter of a Sheffield cutler and herself a dress-maker's assistant in London, and not without artistic and poetic gifts. Rossetti was immensely struck with her and after a long engagement they were married in 1860.

His first publication had been in the Magazine of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, called *The Germ*, to No. 1 of which he contributed *My Sister's Sleep*,

and to No. II that most noted of all his poems, composed when he was but 19, *The Blessed Damozel*. In No. IV he had a poem called *Pax Vobis* dated "Ghent, Church of St. Bavon," which is now called *World's Worth*, the refrain in the last line of each stanza being now entirely changed. There were but four numbers of *The Germ*, the last two being called *Art and Poetry*. They came out in January, February, March and May, 1850. They were reprinted in facsimile in 1901 with a long and interesting introduction by W Rossetti. In 1856 he contributed *The Burden of Nineveh* to *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, of which Ruskin wrote: "I am wild to know who is the author of *The Burden of Nineveh*; it is glorious." In 1861 he published a volume of translations from the Italian poets and obtained at this, which was the happy though sadly short period of his married life, a certain reputation as both artist and poet.

Rossetti was working hard now as a painter and living near Blackfriars Bridge; next year he moved to 14, Cheyne Walk, his brother and George Meredith and Swinburne being under the same roof, and this was his home for two years.

In 1862 his wife died and he was so overcome with grief that he buried with her the MS. of a volume of poems he was on the point of bringing out, and there they remained in the coffin with his dead wife for seven years, when they were disinterred, and in 1870 were published. A somewhat fierce attack on them by R. Buchanan in the *Contemporary* under the heading "The Fleshly School of Poetry," condemning them both on literary and also on moral grounds had an inordinate effect on

Rossetti, who already suffered from insomnia, which he relieved by a somewhat reckless use of chloral. Still he went on painting, though after a dangerous illness in 1872 he became secluded in his habits and often gloomy and depressed. He also wrote and brought out a second volume, called *Ballads and Sonnets*, in 1881.

He sought change of air and scene at this time in the beautiful *Vale of St. John* near Keswick, but it was no good, and he returned to Birchington-on-Sea, near Margate, where he spent his last days nursed by his sister Christina and constantly attended by Mr. Hall Caine. He died on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1882, aged 54, and was buried in the churchyard at Birchington. His brother tells us that he often heard him say that he looked upon himself as more a poet than a painter, which reminds one of Salvator Rosa's epitaph in the church of St. Maria degli Angeli at Rome, "Second to none of his time as a painter, and equal to the first of the poets of all time."

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

1830-1894

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI, who wrote poems both in English and Italian, is a really important figure in English poetical literature. She began writing when only 12 years old, and by the time she was 17, she had a little note-book quite full.

The Prince's Progress and Other Poems was published in 1866; it is rather a tale than a poem. *The Goblin Market and Other Poems* had preceded it by four years. It contains some excellent short pieces, such as *At Home*, *A Birthday*, *Twilight Calm*, *Up-hill*, etc., and some "Devotional Pieces," and whether they are tinged with sadness or filled with joy and brightness they are always original and characteristic, and none more so than the quaintly imaginative *Goblin Market*.

She wrote rather fitfully as the spirit moved her, never made a business of poetry, and never seemed to wish for publicity, hence she left many unpublished poems, most of which were printed by her brother William with the title *New Poems by Christina Rossetti*. She wrote to her brother Dante Gabriel, about her poetry: "It is something of a lyric cry and as such I will back it against all skilled labour." Certainly she felt herself to be a poet, but not a great one. "It is impossible,"

she said, when urged to write, "to go on singing out aloud to one's one-stringed lyre." There is a profile of her in the *New Poems* reproduced from a study of her face by Gabriel Rossetti, made when she was 18, and it is at this time that she also sat for the full-faced Madonna in his picture *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, now in the National Gallery.

At one time she tried governess work, but soon gave it up; and in a letter at the time she says: "I am rejoiced to feel that my health does really unfit me for miscellaneous governessing."

Though not writing much, she always seemed to feel that she and her brother Gabriel were poets and different from other people, but she was quite humble about it, only content not to share the ordinary work and pleasures of the majority of her acquaintances. Some might have called her morbidly devout; she certainly twice gave up the idea of marriage because she did not find that the men came up to her standard of what a Christian and a Churchman should be, but there is nothing mawkish about her writings. There is often a sadness and often a monotony of subject, but there is a visible courage in all of them and a determination to go her own way; and at times there is a playfulness and a wealth of imagination which is quite remarkable. Perhaps the main charm of her verse is the feeling of reality in it. She is never posing, but says just what she thinks, and her thoughts are all her own, for she held no converse with and took (her brother William tells us) no advice from any one about what she wrote. Indeed, he lived with her forty-six years and in all that time he never once saw her composing. Yet they were a most

affectionate family, and the last words of her brother's Preface to the volume of *New Poems* are these, "Her memory is one of my most sacred treasures, and her works and their repute are proportionately dear to me."

The following little poem may be taken as a specimen of her brightness:—

A BIRTHDAY.

My heart is like a singing bird
 Whose nest is in a watered shoot ;
 My heart is like an appletree
 Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit ;
 My heart is like a rainbow shell
 That paddles in a halcyon sea ;
 My heart is gladder than all these
 Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down ;
 Hang it with vair and purple dyes ;
 Carve it in doves, and pomegranates,
 And peacocks with a hundred eyes ;
 Work it in gold and silver grapes,
 In leaves, and silver fleurs-de-lys ;
 Because the birthday of my life
 Is come, my love is come to me.

And these stanzas from *Twilight Calm* are of such a quality that one can only wish that she had left us more :—

Stanza 1.

Oh, pleasant eventide !
 Clouds on the western side
 Grow grey and greyer hiding the warm sun :
 The bees and birds, their happy labours done,
 Seek their close nests and bide.

Stanza 5.

From far the lowings come
 Of cattle driven home :

From farther still the wind brings fitfully
The vast continual murmur of the sea,
Now loud, now almost dumb.

Stanzas 7 and 8.

Hark ! that's the nightingale,
Telling the self-same tale
Her song told when this ancient earth was young :
So echoes answered when her song was sung
In the first wooded vale.

We call it love and pain
The passion of her strain ;
And yet we little understand or know :
Why should it not be rather joy that so
Throbs in each throbbing vein ?

R. BROWNING

1812-1889

THE following is a critique on a new *Life of Browning* by Mr. Herford, which came out not long ago in the *Westminster Review*. "He is a bold man who writes a Life of Browning nowadays. Robert Browning himself did everything to make the biographer's task impossible. The fate of Thomas Carlyle gave an ugly warning to his contemporaries. Tennyson left his memory in trust to his son. Browning went even further. He tore up every letter he could lay hands on. He defied the body-snatchers. But in doing so he deprived the world of much precious treasure, and left his life in almost as much obscurity as some of his own poetry.

"The result is that Browning's biographers soon find their material exhausted. They have to turn to his poems, and must rapidly pass from biography to criticism. Mr. Herford gives us a good deal of this, and the greater part of this little volume is taken up with prose sketches of Browning's poems. We do not dispute that there is a large demand for this sort of thing. There must indeed by now be a large class of people who are thoroughly acquainted with Browning's plots, and perhaps even Browning's poetry. The method has many excuses. Browning is not merely difficult. He may be said almost to have created a language of his own, which requires learning as much as any other dialect of

English. But the worst of it is that he was a poet; and those who read him in Bowdlerized prose cannot therefore be said to have read Browning. Browning's stories—stories like *The Return of the Druses*, or *The Blot in the Scutcheon*—are in themselves extremely unprofitable. With wilful caprice he tore almost any page from the book of life to serve as material for his poetry. *The Inn Album* is just a police story, and even *The Ring and the Book* is based on a narrative little above the level of the Newgate Calendar. Browning's contribution in all these cases is precisely the poetry—the revel of word and phrase and line and rhythm that made him Browning and not another. With the greatest respect, therefore, to writers like Mrs. Orr and Mr. Herford, we are afraid that they become the unconscious creators of a class of Brownings who know not Browning.

“Another result of this dearth of material is that all Browning's biographers have to devote many chapters to Browning's ‘philosophy of life.’ Now we make bold to say that Browning had no philosophy of life. He was not a philosopher at all, but a poet. It follows that he was a learner rather than a teacher. His poetry is full, not of the meaning, but of the wonder, the mystery, the incomprehensibility, of life. With all his agility of intellect, he was primarily a man of perceptions and intuitions. He stood like a man in a great hall full of sounds and lights and scents from some infinite space beyond, and his chief task was to convey to us some of the vividness of the impressions produced on a sensibility of almost unique quickness and responsiveness. From time to time

he threw out splendid assertions, convictions, even dogmas. Through the maze of evanescent sensations he saw from time to time, as in an ecstasy, recurrent flashes of the immortal and the divine. They came to him like the intermittent gleams of a lighthouse to a mariner on a dark sea. We too are mariners on the same sea, and those glimpses of his provide for many of us no mean guidance. But if we try to materialize them in some definite set of maxims, we find ourselves moving among a maze of contradictions, and we destroy at once their beauty and their value.

“ Mr. Herford, to do him justice, seems to have some sense of this danger now and again, and in one admirable passage fully admits that Browning’s ‘conception of the nature of man was not a compact and consistent system, but a group of intuitions nourished from widely different regions of soul and sense.’ But Mr. Herford has to fill his volume, and before the end he is caught in the toils. There are the usual chapters on ‘Browning the Poet,’ and ‘Browning the Interpreter of Life,’ with the usual sub-heads about Browning’s ‘Joy in Power,’ ‘Joy in Soul,’ about ‘Time and Eternity,’ ‘Love,’ ‘Progress and Order,’ and so forth. There is nothing dangerous about such reading. It provides innocent leisure occupation for many who might be worse employed. But does it tend to a better understanding of Browning? We sometimes doubt it. We have had an immense number of such books during the last twenty years; a collection of them would fill a fair-sized library. They have brought Robert Browning into disrepute with many sensible people. They suggest the

question, Would it not be better if people read a little less about his 'philosophy' and a little more of his actual poetry? After all, the volumes of selections which his publishers so wisely put forth from time to time do more to build up Robert Browning's real and deserved position. They help the nervous to take the first plunge. Let us hope that Messrs. Smith and Elder will give us more of them."

To this review, with which I in the main agree, I should like to add a few remarks of my own, and give you a few facts about the poet's early life which he himself supplied to his friend Mr. Gosse, in 1881; being as he said "Tired of this tangle of facts and fancies," by which he meant the biographic sketches of himself which kept appearing in the *Magazines*. To begin then—

Robert Browning was born at Camberwell on May 8, 1812, and died in Venice, December 12, 1889, *aet.* 77. His father, who died in 1866, aged 84, was gifted with a considerable amount of poetic genius. He did not write much but he helped consciously and of set purpose to train his son to be a poet. He had one sister who kept house for him in his closing years, and she remembered him as a very little boy walking round and round the dining-room and spanning out the scansion of his verses with his hand on the smooth mahogany. Already at 8 years old he had seriously debated with himself whether he would be a painter or musician, and when he was 12 he had written poems enough to fill a volume; but, though frequently offered, no publisher would take them.

It seems that he had by this time settled that his

line was poetry, but it was thirty-eight years later that he wrote in the dedication of *Men and Women* to his wife :—

I shall never in the years remaining
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
Make you music that should all-express me :
Verse and nothing else, I have to give you.

Whilst the boy was making his earliest attempts at verse, it is curious to remember that Byron, Shelley and Keats were all still alive. And when he was 13 his mother gave him all Shelley's works and three volumes of Keats which showed him what could be done in verse and made him properly dissatisfied with all he had yet done in that line himself. He went to Dulwich College, then had a tutor at home and for a very short time was at London University. He seems always to have been allowed and encouraged to follow his own bent, and as he grew up he was allowed to pursue poetry unshackled by any profession. This being settled he at once began to plan gigantic schemes for monodramatic epics. Narratives of the life of typical souls. Of several then sketched out only one exists, and that one incomplete, but this was the seed from which, later, sprang *Sordello*.

In 1832, when he was 20, he finished *Pauline*. It has some true poetry in it of the Endymion type, but also all the faults of early and hasty composition which, if you read Browning's preface to it, when he was driven to publish it, in 1867, you will see that he was fully aware of. He says, "The first piece I acknowledge and retain with extreme repugnance, indeed, purely of necessity." It came out anonymously, but D. G. Rossetti was so struck

by it that he copied out the whole of its seventy pages in the British Museum Reading-room. Allan Cunningham reviewed it kindly in the *Athenaeum*, but no one else noticed it and nobody read it.

In 1834 he set out on his travels and spent a long time at St. Petersburg. Wisely he wrote but little, yet he sent four poems to *Fox's Monthly Repository*, one with the cumbrous title of *Johannes Agricola in Meditation*, another was *Porphyria's Lover*, to my mind a very disagreeable piece, and he wrote the song, *A King lived long ago*, afterwards inserted in *Pippa Passes* and also a sonnet—his only one, I think—which he absolutely forgot, and it is not found in any edition of his poems before 1906. One of the family of Fox, the publisher, had however preserved it and identified it as his. Strange that he who knew his own works so well should have forgotten it, for it is a gem in its way, though more a poem than a sonnet. (You will find it at the end of the volume in Dent's *Everyman's Library*. ED.)

Eyes calm beside thee (Lady, couldst thou know!)

May turn away thick with fast gathering tears :

I glance not where all gaze : thrilling and low

Their passionate praises reach thee—my cheek wears
Alone no wonder when thou passest by ;

Thy tremulous lids, bent and suffused, reply
To the irrepressible homage which doth glow

On every lip but mine : If in thine ears
Their accents linger—and thou dost recall

Me as I stood, still, guarded, very pale,

Beside each votarist whose lighted brow

Wore worship, like an aureole, " O'er them all

My beauty," thou wilt murmur, " did prevail

Save that one only."—Lady, couldst thou know !

Next year, 1835, came *Paracelsus*, a drama of a

shapeless kind, full of eloquent casuistry, not without melody but with more than one unbroken soliloquy of over 300 lines. Such disregard of the canons of artistic form had its natural results ; none could read the poem, they were repelled if they tried. The *Athenaeum*, which smiled on his first efforts in *Pauline*, dismissed *Paracelsus* with the remark that it was quite useless to reproduce the obscurity of Shelley minus his poetic beauty. And doubtless the *Athenaeum* was right. For poetry is one of the noblest forms of art ; and what is Art ? It has been well said that Art is Life lifted into a higher, purer atmosphere, an illumination of Life, making Beauty and Truth become one. It deals with Life in all its phases, lofty and humble, but rejects the ignoble and the simply repulsive as not fit subjects. Of this acknowledged law Browning was singularly regardless ; he had a magic power for clothing any subject with verse, and he rather revelled in taking an unlikely or even repellent subject on which to exercise his skill, such as *The Heretic's Tragedy*, or *Holy Cross Day*. We see the same opposition to received opinion in his choice of names for his poems. *Red-Cotton-Nightcap-country* is not poetic, nor is *A Bean-stripe* also *Apple-eating*, and what are we to say to *Jochanan Hakhadosh* ? Browning also wrote very long poems on inadequate subjects, though it is a canon of Art that a long poem must have a great subject. We noticed when studying Coleridge that he wrote for some years before he found out that poetry can never be used for metaphysics or self-introspection, and I think we must agree with the writer who says that a poet's personal opinions are

the most perishable part of him, and the last thing that should be imported into his song. If this is so, the looking for sermons in Browning's work, though it may result in digging up many nodules which when laboriously opened may be found to contain the fossil bones of some undoubted truth, is not the right course to pursue for those who would appreciate the art of the poet. His characters argue infinitely, it is their function. But Browning's own part in the poem is not the argument but the verse. His range, variety and sympathy were extraordinary, and no one had greater powers of versification than he had, at all events since the days of the *In-goldsby Legends*, but he exercised them not unfrequently in a manner that lacked control, resulting in far-fetched and unpleasantly startling rhymes, as well as in unusual and unmelodious forms of expression.

A year after *Paracelsus*, his tragedy *Strafford* came out, November 1836. It was acted in March 1837, by Macready and Helen Faucit at Covent Garden, and, but for the financial collapse of Macready's company after the fifth night it would have had a great run, but both this fine play and *The Blot on the Scutcheon* which was acted by Phelps and Helen Faucit to a crowded house in 1843, were most unfortunately cut short by the collapse of the company that was playing them. The worst was that the poem (*Strafford*) did not sell. In 1838 to 1840 Browning had been writing *Sordello*, an epic in which was chronicled the whole life of a single soul. It was named, "The entirely unintelligible Sordello," and so it has remained for upwards of sixty-five years to many, simple and scholar alike. It must, say the students

of it, be read three times before it begins to be, we will not say entirely lucid but luminous.

It was Browning's protest against the namby-pamby school of poetry which prevailed at the time. But it is over condensed and over rapid, and exhibits, as Browning himself allows in explanation of his admitted error, "a too arrogant contempt for the commonplace habits of the intelligence." Twenty-three years later he tried to re-write it in an easier form, but the attempt was a failure.

Sordello found no sale at all ; and Browning sadly felt that his poetry was nothing but an expense to his friends who paid for the publishing. At this juncture Ed. Moxon, who was bringing out the Old Elizabethan Dramatists in a cheap form said that if Mr. Browning would consent to print his poems as pamphlets on one sheet using this cheap type the expense would be inconsiderable. The poet jumped at the idea and the series of *Bells and Pomegranates* began, each poem being printed separately on a sheet of sixteen pages with double columns and published first at 6*d.* then at 1*s.* and finally at 2*s.* 6*d.* *Pippa Passes* led the way. The public took to this, as the poet had come down to a level which they could understand, and they took to the seven numbers which followed between 1841 and 1846, the year of his marriage. They included the *Dramatic Lyrics* and some of the *Dramatic Romances* and *The Return of the Druses*, and ended in a number of double size with *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*. The "Men and Women" series was written partly before and partly after his marriage, and dedicated to his wife.

Early in the series when the Dramatic Lyrics were being printed, the printer's devil came in haste from

Moxon's shop to ask for some copy to fill up the sheet, and Browning gave him a *jeu d'esprit* which he had lately written to amuse little Willie Macready. This was *The Pied Piper of Hamlyn* which has introduced Browning's name to thousands of houses which would otherwise never have heard of him.

Browning had now found a public who both read and admired him. He was a man of very wide knowledge and sympathies, not always a keen observer, but a notorious thinker. His friend Mr. Gosse describes him as gifted with a large optimism, a warm friend but absolutely ruthless as a foe or when he thought a snub was required.

It has been well said that *poetry is the expression of the most beautiful thoughts in the most beautiful language*. This is simple and satisfying, but the definitions of poetry given by modern professors seem to be both difficult to grasp and inconclusive. Mr. McKail calls poetry "patterned language" and says that the vital function of poetry is to make patterns out of life. This does not help us much. Wordsworth's definition that "poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge" is far better and capable of more universal application than Shelley's dictum that "it is the record of the best and happiest moments of the best and happiest minds." For at the most this is but half true and could hardly be applied to his own great poem the *Cenci* at all.

Professor Henry Newbolt told the Royal Society of Literature lately that poetry was the expression of intuitions or perceptions, the work of the aesthetic activity, while prose was the expression of the thoughts or concepts of our logical and scientific activity.

This rather clumsy definition would appear to mean that poetry was the expression of beautiful ideas and that prose was the form for all logical or reasoning processes and scientific subjects. This is obviously true though not good as a definition which should be terse and clear ; but it does deny the title of poetry to much of the psychological reasoning which Browning has put into verse, for instance, in *La Saisiaz* ; though in Browning's hands it is impossible that poetry should not be found even in the course of a metaphysical disposition, e.g. :—

But the soul is not the body ; and the breath is not the
flute,
Both together make the music : either marred and all is
mute.

But to leave definition, and come to the Man.

Browning and Tennyson, Mr. Stopford Brooke points out, dominated the twin peaks of Parnassus for sixty years, and he proceeds at some length to contrast the two. I don't know that such contrasts are of any great value. But he easily shows how entirely dissimilar they were, in that Tennyson was essentially English, Browning entirely cosmopolitan and chiefly Italian.

Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she
So it always was, so shall ever be.

He adds that " He had no morbid over-refinement ; indeed, it must be admitted that though he appreciated delicacy the processes of his own mind were even a little coarse." Perhaps this may account for

the fact that in his passionate love-poems it seems to make no difference to him whether the love is moral or immoral. In his friendships he was generous and impulsive, and to a single listener he would talk in a most interesting manner about his own poems, and though he forgot many faces and persons in real life his own poetic creatures were always absolutely alive to him, and he would defend their conduct, if criticized, with genuine warmth. Indeed, it may be said that his poetic creations crowded out the real world to a serious extent, otherwise we might have had more of his writing that the ordinary world could understand and read with pleasure. For most of us, however Browningite we may be, must agree with Tennyson that "in poetry there ought to be lucidity and *some* melody, it should not be *all* thought."

He constantly gives us a minute picture of an Italian landscape, *A Morning at Florence*, *A Sunset at Verona*, and that magnificent *Sunrise at the beginning of Pippa Passes*. In almost the only poem he wrote about England—

Oh, to be in England,
Now that April's there,

Browning's long sojourn in Italy has made him antedate the English Spring and allot to April what really in England belongs to May. And so, while Tennyson was the great National poet, Browning seldom speaks as an Englishman. The scenes he describes are abroad, the people he deals with and the stories he illuminates are none of them English, even the brave deeds he describes so graphically are the deeds of foreigners. Hence it comes about that throughout all his poems he tells us nothing of the great changes

of thought and feeling which came over England during the sixty years of his life. This is not to say that he did not enrich the English language with some of its finest passages. But it suffices to explain why his admirers must be in the words of Keats "a little clan." Only those who know Italy can appreciate the extraordinary skill with which he depicts the country and the peasants and still more the life in Italian towns; and not only is it the life of the present day that he shows us, but scenes historic or imaginative of mediæval times and pictures of old-world life among Italians, Germans, Jews, Arabs are all painted with the proper colouring, surroundings and atmosphere in a manner which none save Shakespeare have ever equalled, but which it needs a special education to appreciate. Instances of this are to be found everywhere, notably in *The Englishman in Italy*, *The Ring and the Book*, and that most graphic of all his poems, *The Bishop orders his Tomb in St. Praxed's Church*. Another, and perhaps the chief characteristic of Browning, both of the man and his writing, is his consistent optimism, and a faith in God and humanity which he is never tired of repeating.

My own hope is a sun will pierce
 The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
 That, after Last, returns the First,
 Though a wide compass round be fetched;
 That what began best, can't end worst,
 Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.
Apparent Failure.

Or again—

All we have willed or hoped, or dreamed of good shall
 exist,
 Not its semblance but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor
 power

Whose voice has gone forth but each survives for the
Melodist

When Eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too
hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;

Enough that he heard it once : we shall hear it by and by.

Abt Vogler.

He goes so far in the same poem as to insist even
that failure is not simply a useful discipline or an in-
centive to more successful efforts, but a herald and
even a guarantee of success.

The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good
more ;

Or again—

What is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fullness of the days ?

Abt Vogler.

But we must never give up. Life-long struggle, even
if it seems in vain, is better than placid content.

In his fine poem *Rabbi Ben Ezra* he tells us this—

Then welcome each rebuff

That turns each smoothness rough,

Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go !

Be our joys three parts pain !

Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;

Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge the throe,

For thence—a paradox

Which comforts while it mocks—

Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail :

What I aspired to be,

And was not comforts me ;

A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

Later in the poem he insists that God will take
account of our endeavours as much as of our deeds.

Not on the vulgar Mass
 Called "work" must sentence pass,
 Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
 O'er which from level stand
 The low world laid its hand,
 Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice.

But all, the world's coarse thumb
 And finger failed to plumb,
 So passed in making up the main account;
 All instincts immature,
 All purposes unsure,
 That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's
 amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
 Into a narrow act,
 Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
 All I could never be,
 All men ignored in me
 This, was I worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

This life-long optimism which we see splendidly expressed in *Abt Vogler* and *La Sasiaz* was to Browning both a blessing and a curse. Through it, when others were battling with doubt and finally overcoming, he was all along at peace: he noted the discords, but had a sure and certain faith that all must come right at last.

On the earth the broken arcs, in the heaven the perfect round,

but this very absence of doubt and struggle throughout all his life makes his life less interesting, and certainly tends to make his teaching monotonous.

Pauline, with its beautiful description of the old woods, was written when Browning was 20, and *Paracelsus* three years later, and already his doctrine is fully developed. We are here to fit ourselves for a future life, we have many limitations which produce

failure, but it is good that it should be so as it prevents our being content with this life and helps to develop the divine in us and is really better for us than earthly success would be, for to be satisfied with that would be the worst of failure, as he says in the difficult poem *Easter Day*, for he harps on the same string throughout,

Thou art shut
Out of the heaven of spirits; glut
Thy sense upon this world: 'tis thine
For ever—take it!

We have the same thought again in *The Grammarian's Funeral*, that the future alone is worth considering.

Earn the success first. God surely will contrive
Use for our earning.

Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes
Live now or never!"

He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
Man has forever."

The idea that perfection is unattainable here but must still be striven after so that we may attain it hereafter is carried further in *Paracelsus*, who aims at the perfecton of Intellect while *Aprile* hopes for the sum of love, neither of which can be attained in this world of limitations, and at last both of them feel their failure, and yet, Browning insists, it is not failure because their aims at perfection were right, their mistakes were firstly, to expect it there, and secondly, to think that their failure was final instead of being a prophecy of greater glory to come."

Matthew Arnold in speaking of the admirers of Wordsworth says "we must be on our guard against the Wordsworthians. They are apt to praise him for the wrong things and lay far too much stress on what

they call his philosophy," and similarly it behoves us to beware of the out and out Browningite who usually praises Browning for his philosophy and his theories of life, etc., but really Browning is no philosopher and his theories of life are all as old as the New Testament. After all I take it that what we turn to a poet for is his poetry, and his noble expression of great truths, and it is as a poet, and a great poet, that we hail Robert Browning. The writer of *Saul*, of *Abt Vogler*, of *Karshish*, of *Prospice*, of *The Bishop ordering his Tomb*, of *La Saisaiz*, of *Pheidippides* and *Hervè Riel*, to say nothing of *The Ring and the Book*, has done enough for immortality. Besides which are there not, in his "Dramatic Lyrics," *The Lost Leader*, *Love among the ruins*, *How they brought the Good News* and *By the Fireside*? In "Dramatis Personae" the charming little bits, *May and Death*, *Youth and Art* and *Confessions*?

What is he buzzing in my ears?

"Now that I come to die,

Do I view the world as a vale of tears"?

Ah, reverend sir, not I!

And, in the "Dramatic Romances," *The Patriot* and *The Gondola*, a poem full of beauty and passion, and whose theme is blended of Love and Death and Pity.

As is not unnatural in a writer whose pen was at work through so many years, his later writings, those which followed his mighty effort, *The Ring and the Book*, are not up to the poetic level of his earlier ones. With the exception of *Pheidippides* the two series of "Dramatic Idylls" and *Jocoseria* add little or nothing to his fame, and the same may be said of *Ferishtah's Fancies* and *Parleyings with Certain People*, and all these with *Asolando* were published in the last decade

of his life. I agree with Mr. Stopford Brooke, in thinking that some of the earlier poems in *Asolando*—*Now, Summum Bonum*, and the two following, which breathe of the passionate love of youth—were the work of his early days long laid by. But just as *Crossing the Bar* was one of Tennyson's latest poems so in the Epilogue to *Asolando* Browning finishes his life's labour with as fine a bit of writing as he ever produced.

EPILOGUE

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep time,
 When you set your fancies free,
 Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, im-
 prisoned—
 Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,—
 pity me ?

Oh, to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken !
 What had I on earth to do
 With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly ?
 Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel
 —Being—who ?

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward
 Never doubted clouds would break,
 Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would
 triumph,
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
 Sleep to wake.

No, at Noonday in the bustle of man's worktime
 Greet the unseen with a cheer !
 Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
 " Strive and thrive ! " cry, " Speed—fight on, fare for-
 ward ¹ ever
 There as here ! "

There remains only to speak of Browning's style.
 It is one peculiarly his own and likely to remain so,

¹ I have supplied this word at a guess. In my edition of *Asolando* the printer has left two syllables out here.

and is one of his peculiarities which we can least admire. The others are—

His choice of unworthy or of unpoetic subjects,
His perpetual argument and analysis of motives,
His long-windedness,
His fantastic tricks of rhyme and odd arrangement of words, etc., and
His wilful obscurity.

All these defects added to the frequent want of melody in his verse obviously detract from the merit of much that he wrote; and deprive it in great measure of both the dignity and poetic charm which are characteristics of all "Great Verse." In his revolt against the "namby-pamby" writers, Browning went to the opposite extreme, and rather prided himself on being able to make verse on the most unlikely subjects, and he allowed his individuality to run riot in his style. He did not care what the world in general thought of his poetry, or even whether the world in general could understand him or even read him, and what was worse he hardly put any value on simplicity or lucidity but revelled in his power of doing difficult things. Hence he seems often to put a value on intellect rather than feeling, clever writing rather than melody, on matter rather than form. But why could we not have had both? His grotesque rhymes in *Pacchiarotto*, who rhymes to "paint-pot O," and Abbot to "Dab-pot," and endless others such as we look for in the *Ingoldsby Legends* but not in serious poetry, the numerous tags of Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Italian, the absurd list of rhymes to the names of Italian painters in *Old Pictures in Florence*, ending

with "bag 'em hot" to rhyme with Witmagemot are either a bad joke or a sort of insult to his readers.

Then the intellectual subtlety, the minute arguments, the endless use of parenthesis within parenthesis, the constant putting of some words in their wrong places, and omission of other words which the verse requires, the leaving out of the article, e.g., "put case" or "oped heart, flung door wide," and the use of such slang expressions as "tother," etc., all tend to detract from the dignity of the verse and the pleasure in reading it.

Further, besides being in many of his best things extremely obscure and his arguments very difficult to follow, he seems at times to take delight in saying a simple thing in a most involved and unusual manner; for instance, take this stanza from *Popularity*—

Hobbs hints blue—straight he turtle eats :

Nobbs prints blue—claret crowns his cup :

Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—

Both gorge. Who fished the murex up ?

What porridge had John Keats ?

This is an instance of what has been called Browning's "preciosity." He could have said it quite differently and simply but he chose to say it like this.

For his choice of subjects unworthy of poetic treatment look at *The Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister*, at *Hulbert and Hob* in "The Dramatic Idylls," at *Donald* in "Jocoseria," at *Mr. Sludge the Medium*, and subjects in *The Inn Album* and *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*. Of this Mr. Stopford Brooke in his chapter on "Womanhood in Browning," speaking of Ottima in *Pippa Passes* says, "Then the subject-matter is sordid. Nothing relieves the coarseness of Sebald, Ottima and Luca and their relations to one another,

but the few descriptions of Nature and the happy flash of innocence when Pippa passes by. Nor are there any large fates behind the tale or large effects to follow which might lift the crime into dignity. This mean, commonplace, ugly kind of subject had a strange attraction for Browning as we see in *The Inn Album*, in *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* and elsewhere." Then these very poems are so long-winded: *Fifine at the Fair* covers 130 pages; *Bp. Blougram* runs into 1,000 lines and is hardly poetry. In *Mr. Sludge the Medium* we have 1,600 lines of sheer prose, while *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* runs to 85 pages of the dullest prose. Finally, *The Inn Album* covers 130 pages and *Red Cotton Night-cap Country* 170, and all singularly deficient in poetic beauty. For an instance of what I mean by prose, take the following—

From *The Flight of the Duchess*—

I saddled myself the very palfrey
 I remember patting while it carried her,
 The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
 And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
 Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
 The lady had not forgotten it either.

Of course, *The Ring and the Book* is far longer than any. It is very unequal and has whole books in which it is hard to find any real poetry, but it is a great work and has many fine passages in it. And it is amazingly clever, for certainly only Browning of all poets ever born, could, starting with so poor a theme, have told the same story twelve times over as he has done in the four volumes of this lengthy poem in such a way as to make it possible to read it through.

Rossetti relates how Carlyle, wishing to say something pleasant to Browning about it, called it "a

wonderful book, one of the most wonderful poems ever written ; I re-read it all through, all made out of an Old Bailey story that might have been told in ten lines and only wants forgetting."

His portraits of men, Guido, Caponsacchi, the Pope, and all the good folk of Arezzo, the lawyer Hyacinthus especially and his family, are quite first-rate, and standing far above them all is the charming Pompilia. She is one of the two women folk among all Browning's creations who stand out pre-eminent, they are Pompilia, so natural and loveable and so beautifully different from all her surroundings, and the Greek Girl, Balaustion. The rest of Browning's women do not take hold of us, as all Shakespeare's wonderful creations do, but, in all his work, no imaginary woman could come near in interest to the one real woman for whom he lived and wrought, whom he constantly addresses in his poems, and to whose spirit he makes that passionate cry at the end of the Introduction to *The Ring and the Book*.

O Lyric Love, half angel and half bird
And all a wonder and a wild desire,—
Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,
Took sanctuary within the holier blue,
And sang a kindred soul out to his face—
Yet human at red-ripe of the heart—
When the first summons from the darkling earth
Reached thee amid thy chambers, blanched their blue,
And bared them of the glory—to drop down,
To toil for man, to suffer or to die,—
This is the same voice : can thy soul know change ?
Hail then and hearken from the realms of help !
Never may I commence my song, my due
To God who best taught song by gift of thee,
Except with bent head and beseeching hand—
That still despite the distance and the dark,

What was, again may be ; some interchange
 Of grace, some splendour once thy very thought,
 Some benediction anciently thy smile :
 —Never conclude, but raising hand and head
 Thither where eyes, that cannot reach, yet yearn
 For all hope, all sustainment, all reward,
 Their utmost up and on—so blessing back
 In those thy realms of help, that heaven thy home,
 Some whiteness which, I judge, thy face makes proud,
 Some wanness where, I think, thy foot may fall !

Just before that passage Browning addresses the British public as "Ye who like me not." But was not this greatly his own fault ? All were ready to admire his great personality and his remarkable poetic gifts, but he would not often write in such a way that they could understand him. The two first aims of a great artist in words, lucidity and melody, he constantly disregards, and if we take the well-known definition of poetry, that it is the most beautiful thoughts expressed in the most beautiful language, how much of his writing there is to which posterity is not likely to allow the name of poetry ! And though his writings contain some of the best work of the age and much that is bound to be immortal, we cannot but feel regret that he was so careless of the rules of his art and that he did not take more pains to express his many fine thoughts in more melodious language.

Had he thought more of his art we could more easily have forgiven his obscurity, for obscure he often is. His uncle used to tell him that he ought to print his poems as official documents are printed, with a wide margin for notes and queries, adding, "Why don't you print your poetry in the usual way and then at the side say what it means ?"

But obscurity is not always a deterrent ; for we are told how the friend of an author once brought some MS.

poems to the Editor of *Frazer* and said that one which described a picture was a very fine poem. This picture was not understandable, and the poem made it no clearer, but that it was a very fine poem nevertheless.

SONNET

BY

CANON RAWNSLEY.

AT SOMERSBY

Aug. 5, 1809

The whole earth rested, only through the air
Full-breathed of rose and lime I heard a rill
Tinkle in Holywell, and Stockwith mill
Sent back by silent meadows music rare.
On dewy beech and lawn lay moonlight fair,
And high o'er glimmering corn on Tetford hill
The level Plow with all its stars stood still,
As if the heaven itself had ceased from care.
But one was sleepless ; through the gates of pain
A little life came wailing to its home—
A life that brought new music to mankind,
Music to bid us each life's purpose find,
Till through the doors of sorrow—born again—
We win the bourne of peace from whence we came.
H. D. RAWNSLEY.

August 6, 1909.

1809-1892

TENNYSON CENTENARY

AUGUST 6, 1909

IN one of the prettiest parts of the Lincoln Wolds, about half way between Alford—six miles off on the east—and Horncastle on the west, and almost the same distance to the south-west from Spilsby and Halton, the homes of Tennyson's intimate friends, the Franklins and Rawnsleys, in a valley almost surrounded by hills, lies the picturesque little village of Somersby. Hither in June 1808 came Mr. Tennyson, as Rector of the parish, with his wife and their son Frederick (George, the eldest, had died in infancy), and here in July 1808 was born Charles, and in 1809 Alfred. He is entered in the baptismal register of August 8, in his father's neat small handwriting, as "Alfred, son of George Clayton and Elizabeth Tennyson, baptized, born August 6th."

The figure "6" looks at first sight like a 5, but certainly is a 6, and though the poet always declared that he was born a few minutes before midnight, whilst as yet it was August 5, his birthday was always reckoned from the first morning of his life, August 6, 1809. The Doctor and his wife lived at Somersby for twenty-three years, and

all the rest of the children were born there, in the following order:—Mary and Emily, Edward, Arthur and Septimus (the seventh son), Matilda, Cecilia and Horatio. Of all these, Matilda alone is left to-day, Cecilia having died on March 18, 1909, in her ninety-second year.

Cecilia married Professor Edmund Lushington, and his wedding day is for ever celebrated in the last canto of *In Memoriam*. Emily's memory is enshrined in the same immortal work, as the betrothed of Arthur Hallam. She afterwards became Mrs. Jesse, died in 1887; and Mary, who always said she had no opinion of men, also married and went out to Antigua as Mrs. Ker. Writing to a great friend at Somersby she says:

“O, my beloved darling, what creatures men are. My brothers are the exceptions to this general rule.”

Writing again to the same lady, after she had become Mrs. Ker, she says—

“Since I have had some talk with Mrs. Henry, I find it is her opinion, *from experience*, that all men with very few exceptions are given to very shifty ways; not half so good and upright as women.” Charles, who took the name of Tennyson-Turner, is most closely associated with Alfred, as they were the chief authors of the *Poems by Two Brothers*, published in 1827, though, even in that volume, Frederick, who was the best scholar of them all, had, if not a hand, at least a finger in the pie; and the bond between Charles and Alfred was drawn tighter by their eventually marrying sisters, Louisa and Emily Sellwood, of Horncastle. Charles wrote that on the day, when their first volume appeared in print they hired a conveyance and

drove off to the sea at their beloved Mablethorpe, where they shared their triumph with the winds and waves, shouting themselves hoarse on the shore as they rolled out poem after poem in one another's ears. He adds : " I think that if any one had met us they would have thought us out of our minds, and in a way I think that day we were indeed beside ourselves with joy." Charles, who married in 1837, became Vicar of Grasby in Lincolnshire, and died on April 25, 1879, his wife following him within a month. His sonnets, published at intervals from 1830 to 1880, were some of them of great beauty, notably No. 206 of his *Collected Sonnets* called *Letty's Globe*.

When Letty had scarce passed her third glad year,
And her young artless words began to flow,
One day we gave the child a coloured sphere
Of the wide earth, that she might mark and know,
By tint and outline, all its sea and land.
She patted all the world ; old empires peeped
Between her baby fingers ; her soft hand
Was welcome at all frontiers. How she leaped
And laugh'd and prattled in her world-wide bliss ;
But when we turned her sweet unlearned eye
On our own isle she raised a joyful cry,
" Oh ! yes, I see it, Letty's home is there ! "
And, while she hid all England with a kiss,
Bright over Europe fell her golden hair.

Frederick outlived all his brothers. He was the author of a volume of poems called *Days and Hours*, published in 1834, and many years later, in 1890, of *The Isles of Greece*, of which the Laureate, asking me if I had read it, said that there was some very good verse in it ; and in 1896 he sent me his last volume called *Poems of the Day and Year*, of which he had had twenty-five volumes bound in

vellum for presentation to his friends. He was ninety when he published this volume, and it is full of poetic beauty. Listen, for instance, to the first stanza of the poem called *The Skylark and the Poet*.

How the blythe lark runs up the golden stair
 That leads through cloudy gates from Heaven to Earth,
 And all alone in the empyreal air
 Fills it with jubilant sweet songs of mirth!
 How far he seems, how far
 With the light upon his wings!
 Is it a bird or star
 That shines and sings?¹

His portrait at the beginning of the volume shows his fine forehead and face. He had bright blue eyes, a great contrast to the dark Spaniard-like colouring of the rest of the family.

A clergyman, though holding four benefices at once, having a family of eleven to bring up, would naturally feel the *res angusta domi*, and though Frederick went to Eton, where he became Captian of the Oppidans, the rest of the boys could not all expect more teaching than the Grammar School of the neighbouring town of Louth could supply, which was however plentifully augmented by the learning and the teaching ability of their father.

In a letter dated "Tuesday, 28, 1826," to my grandfather, who had asked him to dine, Dr. Tennyson says—

"You have little or nothing to do but warm your shins over the fire while I am frozen or suffocated with Greek and Latin."

¹ This is printed in a little volume published in Oxford called *The Time of the Singing of Birds*.

Alfred stayed at Louth with his grandmother Mrs. Fytche, and went to the day school when he was seven years old, but he hated it, and left it with pleasure for home-teaching in 1820. The Doctor had a good library, and the whole family were great readers. The boys studied the classics with their father, and worked at modern languages with their mother; nor were mathematics and natural science or music and dancing omitted.

For eight years Alfred and Charles studied at home, gaining an irregular but doubtless a wider and more varied education than they would have obtained at any public school. In 1828 they went to Trinity, Cambridge, where Frederick was already a distinguished Greek scholar and a University prizeman. At Cambridge, Alfred's remarkable appearance, his grand head, his splendid physique, and the union of strength with refinement, struck all who saw him. Thompson, who afterwards became Master of Trinity, on his first appearance in Hall, exclaimed, "That man must be a poet." He was fortunate in having a rare set of intimate friends, including Spedding, Monckton-Milnes, Trench, Alford, Brookfield, Blakesley, Thompson, Stephen Spring-Rice, Merivale, Kemble, Heath, Buller, Tennant, Monteith and Arthur Hallam.

He was soon made a member of the very exclusive Cambridge Conversazione Society, which, being limited to twelve, was called "The Apostles," of which Frederick Maurice was the creator, and of which Hallam writes in a letter to Gladstone: "the effects produced on the minds of many at Cambridge by the single creation of that Society of 'Apostles' is far greater than I dare to calculate,

and will be felt both directly and indirectly in the age that is upon us." All of them were full of enthusiasm for literature, and for the Modern Schools of thought, and full of admiration for poetry, especially that of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley and Byron, though *his* "comet blaze" was already on the wane.

He had died in April 1824, and nothing had ever moved the fifteen-year-old boy, Alfred Tennyson, so much as the news of his death. For he tells us that when a lad he was possessed by Byron; later in life he could not read him. But at this time he felt stunned, and as if the whole world were darkened for him, and he could only retire into the Holywell Wood at Somersby and cut with his knife in the Greensand rock, "Byron is dead." Many years later he said to me that Byron had passed out of his great popularity too entirely, but that he thought he would come into favour again.

As early as 1829 Arthur Hallam, writing to Gladstone, said, "I consider Tennyson as promising fair to be the greatest poet of our generation, perhaps of our century." The friends had intended to produce a joint volume, but Hallam withdrew and in the year 1830 Tennyson's first volume, called *Poems chiefly Lyrical*, came out. Most of the poems had been written while he was at Cambridge; in two of them he refers to his friend Blakesley, afterwards Dean of Lincoln, whom he addressed in one as "Clearheaded Friend," in the other as "Dark-browed Sophist." The two poems which attracted most attention were *Mariana* and *Arabian Nights*, but the volume also contained *The Merman* and

Mermaid, The Dying Swan, The Ode to Memory,
and the *Song* which begins—

A spirit haunts the year's last hours
Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers :
To himself he talks.

These two, but the *Ode to Memory* especially, treat of the old home at Somersby and the little sea-coast village of Mablethorpe. The lines about his home are as follows—

Come forth, I charge thee, arise,

Divinest Memory !

Come from the woods that belt the grey hill-side,
The seven elms, the poplars four
That stand beside my father's door,
And chiefly from the brook that loves
To purl o'er matted cress and ribbéd sand,
Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,
Drawing into his warm earthen urn,
In every elbow and turn,
The filtered tribute of the rough woodland.

O ! hither lead thy feet !

Pour round mine ears the livelong bleat
Of the thick fleeced sheep from wattled folds,

Upon the ridged wolds,
When the first matin-song hath waken'd loud
Over the dark dewy earth forlorn,
What time the amber morn
Forth gushes from beneath a low-hung cloud.

Those last lines have a ring of Milton in them, of whom he was always a great admirer. Later, in his poem to Memory, he says—

Artist-like,
Ever retiring thou dost gaze
On the prime labour of thine early days :
No matter what the sketch might be ;
Whether the high field on the bushless Pike,

Or even a sand-built ridge
 Of heapéd hills that mound the sea,
 Overblown with murmurs harsh,
 Or even a lowly cottage whence we see
 Stretched wide and wild the waste enormous marsh,
 Where from the frequent bridge,
 Emblems or glimpses of eternity,
 The trenchéd waters run from sky to sky.

He is here speaking of Mablethorpe, a little sea-coast village close to the sandhills which keep out the sea from the Marsh; and please note that the marsh is not a bog but a belt of rich pasture land, five to seven miles wide with no hedges or trees, but divided into fields by "dykes" full of water, and extending along the line of the coast from Boston to Grimsby.

In these early poems the accented last syllable of the past participle trenchéd, heapéd, ridgéd, thick fleecéd, and ribbéd, abounds; in his later work it never occurs. In the little poem *We are Free*, which is only to be found in the 1830 volume, you will notice the same thing.

The winds, as at their hour of birth
 Leaning upon the ridged sea,
 Breathed low around the rolling earth
 With mellow preludes "We are free."
 The streams through many a liliated row
 Down carolling to the crispéd sea,
 Low-tinkled with a bell-like flow
 Atween the blossoms, "We are free."

Certainly with him early impressions were ineffaceable; and, though after he became Poet Laureate he lived all his life in the South of England he loved to see Lincolnshire faces and to hear of Lincolnshire, and to talk the Doric dialect, in

which he wrote *The Northern Farmer* and his subsequent *Lincolnshire Poems*.

Two other poems in the 1830 volume, which are never seen now, are worthy of praise: *Hero and Leander* and lines *To a Lady Sleeping*. The latter runs thus:

O Thou whose fringed lids¹ I gaze upon,
Through whose dim brain the wingéd dreams are borne,
Unroof the shrines of clearest vision,
In honour of the silver-fleckéd morn:
Long hath the white wave of the virgin light
Driven back the billow of the dreamful dark.
Thou all unwittingly prolongest night,
Though long ago listening the poiséd lark
With eyes dropped downward through the blue serene,
Over heaven's parapets the angels lean.

Hero and Leander is an impassioned appeal of the lady to her lover to stay with her and not attempt to swim the Hellespont that night, a feat in which he eventually lost his life. As no one ever sees this poem now, I will quote the first stanza.

HERO TO LEANDER.

Oh go not yet, my love,
The night is dark and vast;
The white moon is hid in her heaven above
And the waves climb high and fast.
Oh! kiss me, kiss me, once again,
Lest thy kiss should be the last.
Oh kiss me ere we part;
Grow closer to my heart.
My heart is warmer surely than the bosom of the main.
O joy! O bliss of blisses!
My heart of hearts art thou.
Come bathe me with thy kisses,
My eyelids and my brow.
Hark how the wild rain hisses
And the loud sea roars below.

¹ The fringed curtain of thine eye advance.

Shakespeare, *Tempest*, I. 2.

It is more like Byron than anything else in his poems, and is a lyric of considerable beauty and power. But he never included it in subsequent editions, and no doubt he had his reasons; possibly he considered it too Byronic.

Tennyson had started with Arthur Hallam for the Pyrenees in that year (1830), and the beautiful poem *Ænone* was begun in the Vale of Caunteretz in the Pyrenees about which he wrote that touching poem when he revisited the valley two and thirty years later with Arthur Clough. It is in the *Enoch Arden* volume which was published in 1864.

All along the Valley, stream that flashest white,
Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,
All along the Valley, where thy waters flow,
I walked with one I loved two and thirty years ago.
All along the Valley, while I walked to-day,
The two and thirty years were a mist which rolls away;
For all along the Valley, down thy rocky bed,
Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,
And all along the Valley, by rock and cave and tree,
The voice of the Dead was a living voice to me.

In my brother's book, *Memories of the Tennysons*, is a photograph of a sketch taken in 1830 on the steamer *Leeds*, by which they returned from Bordeaux, in which Arthur Hallam is shown lying on the deck with Alfred Tennyson and Robertson Glasgow and one other, reading to the wife and daughters of the artist the last new Waverley Novel. One of the daughters, Mrs. Clay, from whom I have had a full account of this, died in January 1908, in Ambleside, aged 94.

Alfred, Charles and Hallam returned to Cambridge, but, in February 1831, the Tennysons were summoned to attend their father, who was far

from well, and on March 16 he passed away as he sat in his chair, at the age of 52.

We all know what a huge trade is done by the owners of the North Sea fishing fleets at Grimsby, and how large and busy a place it has long been. So it is curiously interesting to read on Dr. Tennyson's tomb in Somersby Churchyard the words, "Rector of this parish, of Bag Enderby and Benithworth, and *Vicar of Great Grimsby* in this county"—and that but eighty years ago.

After this Alfred did not return to Cambridge for his degree, but lived at home, and they were able to keep the Somersby home for another six years before the incoming Rector required it.

Mrs. Tennyson was two years younger than her husband, and she lived to be 84, and died in 1865. She was small, dark-eyed and highly sensitive. Alfred tells us that she was frightened to death of a thunderstorm, and Mary breaks off in the middle of a letter, dated, March 1851, with "It thunders, and I must go and see how Mammy gets on." She often writes of her as "the little mother," or "the dear innocent little mother," and the poem in the 1830 volume called *Isabel* is descriptive of her, and speaks of her gentle voice, her keen intellect, her

Sweet lips whereon perpetually did reign
The summer calm of golden charity,

and her

locks not wide-dispread,
Madonna-wise on either side her head.

You will see this in her picture in my brother's book, *Memories of the Tennysons*, a small book and

out of print now, but which I think lovers of Tennyson would find very interesting.

Nothing seems to have stopped the flow from his pen at this time. Perpetual idleness he used to say must be one of the punishments of Hell. The 1830 volume was quickly followed in December 1832 by a volume called *Poems*—dated 1833—which were an immense advance, and contained some work which he never surpassed. *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Palace of Art*, *The Miller's Daughter*, *Ænone*, *The May Queen*, and *New Year's Eve*, *The Lotus Eaters*, *A Dream of Fair Women*, and the *Lines to James Spedding* on the death of his brother Edward. Think of all those wonderful poems in a small volume of 162 pages, written before he was 23.

Touching *The May Queen*, there is an interesting letter in the Bodleian Library at Oxford in which Tennyson vindicates himself from the charge of making the white-thorn blossom grow on the blackthorn tree. "I, who have lived all my life in the country, must surely know the difference between the Blackthorn and the Maythorn."

Yet the last line of Stanza 2, in the *New Year's Eve*, in the 1832 volume, has

And the New Year's coming up, Mother, but I shall never
see

The *may upon the blackthorn*, the leaf upon the tree.

"The May" simply stands here for the bloom or flower. In the 1842 volume it is altered to *The blossom on the blackthorn*, and the third part, *The Conclusion*, is added, beginning

I thought to pass away before, and yet alive I am,
And in the fields all round I hear the bleating of the
lamb.

With regard to *The Miller's Daughter*, there was a copy of Volume I of the 1842 edition of these poems on view at the Tennyson Centenary Exhibition in London, lent by Mr. T. J. Wise, which contains three or four of the cancelled stanzas of the 1833 volume, written on the fly leaves by the Poet himself. One of these is very pretty, and is given in the first volume of *The Memoir* by his son ; it runs thus :

I heard, or I have seemed to hear,
When all the under air was still,
The low voice of the glad New Year
Call to the freshly-flowered hill.
I heard, as I have often heard,
The nightingale in leafy woods
Call to its mate, when nothing stirred
To left or right but falling floods.

The poem, as printed, has just a reminiscence of this stanza in the word "freshly-flowered." Another, which had never been republished until the appearance of the annotated edition of the poems in 1908, is this—

That slope beneath the chestnut tall
Is woo'd with choicest breaths of air,
Methinks that I could tell you all
The cowslips and the kingcups there,
Each coltsfoot down the grassy bent
Whose round leaves hold the gathered shower,
Each quaintly folded cuckoo-pint
And silverpaly cuckoo flower.

In 1832 every enthusiastic lover of poetry at Cambridge was reading to his friends *The Palace of Art* and *The Dream of Fair Women*, *The Lotus*

Eaters, The Lady of Shalott, and Ænone, with those wonderful lines from *Ænone* beginning

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.

In the 1832 volume however this reads differently—

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
Are the three hinges of the gates of Life,
That open into power, every way
Without horizon, bound or shadow or cloud.

“The three hinges of the gates of Life” is an image which one is sorry to have lost; but the Poet perhaps rightly judged that to get into one line what was in the first edition spread over three lines was an advantage.

It was the same at Oxford as at Cambridge. Dean Liddell once told me that there never was a pleasure in the world equal to that of getting a few of one’s intimate friends together and reading this new volume of Tennyson’s round the fire in one another’s rooms at night.¹

Even the 1830 volume had had many ardent admirers. Charles Kingsley, himself a poet, wrote in 1850: “Some of our readers we would fain hope remember as an era in their lives the first day on which they read these earlier poems, how *Mariana in the Moated Grange, The Dying Swan, The Lady of Shalott*, etc., came to them as revelations. They seemed to themselves to have found at

¹ I mentioned this in a lecture at Carlisle, and a gentleman came up to me afterwards and said how true the statement was; he had himself been one of those who used to read each new volume as it came out, and the delight with which they devoured them was one of the joys of life which could never be forgotten.

last a poet who promised not only to combine the cunning melody of Moore, the rich fullness of Keats, and the simplicity of Wordsworth, but one who was introducing a method of observing nature different from that of all the three, and yet succeeding in everything which they had attempted often in vain."

Thus, in spite of adverse criticism, friends and admirers in fast increasing numbers were devouring the poems, not only at Cambridge and Oxford, but wherever men of culture foregathered. Nor was it on grown up men alone that Tennyson's poems made these deep impressions. Another writer, Mr. J. C. Watson, had the 1842 volume put into his hands when he was a boy of twelve ; he opened on *Locksley Hall*, and " Never shall I forget," he says, " the thrill, the ecstasy with which I read and re-read the passionate lines. New feelings of ardour were aroused in me, my mind seemed to open to splendid revelations, and I realized the intense truth of Keats' declaration on first ' looking into ' Chapman's *Homer*.

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken."

But for all this the two earlier volumes met with a good deal of hard criticism, being treated, says James Spedding, as sufficiently notable to be worth some not unelaborate ridicule.

1831, the year after their return from the Pyrenees, saw Arthur Hallam much at Somersby, for he had been attached to Alfred's sister Emily since 1829, and in 1831 they were formally engaged. He taught her Italian, and, as the family were

never without books in their hands and had the admirable custom of reading the best authors aloud, Shakespeare, Milton, Chaucer, Spenser and Campbell gave place when Arthur Hallam was with them to Dante, Petrarch, Tasso and Ariosto. Hallam writes that this engagement is, "I fervently hope, only the commencement of a union which circumstances may not impair and the grave itself may not conclude." Alas! this was not to be. In 1833 Arthur Hallam went abroad with his father. They had reached Vienna when his father, on returning from a walk, found Arthur apparently asleep on the sofa. But a blood vessel near the brain had burst: "God's finger touched him and he slept." This was on September 15, 1833. He was only 22, but acknowledged by all who knew him to be a man of amazing powers, and of singular charm. Gladstone speaks of him as far ahead of every one he knew at Eton; and at Cambridge Milnes wrote that Thirlwall was captivated by him, and adds, "He is the only man here of my own standing before whom I bow in conscious inferiority in everything." Alford said, "He had a wonderful mind, and knowledge on all subjects hardly credible at his age," and "he was of the most tender, affectionate disposition." Tennyson's opinion of him is contained in *In Memoriam*. "The man I held as half divine." The blow was a terrible one to him and his sister. But he turned to work as a solace and wrote *The Two Voices*, and began his sections of *In Memoriam* within two months of Arthur's death, with "Fair ship that from the Italian shore"; and the canto, "With trembling fingers did we weave," was the

work of the following December (1834). The rest occupied him sixteen years. The shock almost killed Emily ; and, but that he had her to tend, Alfred said that he would gladly have died too.

In 1835 he was with the Speddings at Mirehouse, on Lake Bassenthwaite, where he met Edward FitzGerald, his great friend for the next eight and forty years.

In 1885 the " *Teiresias* " volume came out with a prologue addressed to " Old Fitz " and written in his lifetime, but as was usual kept by the author for a long time before publishing. For Fitz died in 1883 and a postscript is added to the prologue in which the poet says—

Remembering the happy hours
Now silent—and so many dead,
And him the last.

Of this visit to the Lakes James Spedding in a letter to Donne dated " June 1st, 1835, Mirehouse," says, E. F. G. (Edward FitzGerald) was here for about a month. He is a prince of Quietists. I reckon myself a quiet man, but that is nature, in him it is principle. Half the self-sacrifice, the self-denial, the moral resolution which he exercises to keep himself easy would amply furnish forth a martyr or a missionary. His tranquillity is like a pirated copy of the Peace of God. Truly he is a most comfortable companion. He would have everybody about him as comfortable as himself. . . . There tarried with us at the same time a man who is in many points his opposite. . . . To wit Alfred Tennyson . . . for he is a man always discontented with the Present until it has become the

Past, and then he yearns towards it and worships it, but is discontented because it *is* past. But though this habit makes him gruff and dyspeptic at times, you must understand that he is a man of a noble spirit and a tender heart, his frailty is that he has not faith enough in his own powers." The letter goes on to speak of Wordsworth.

"I saw Wordsworth for a few hours not long ago." (That was not an age for snapshot visits.) "He is very well himself but troubled with domestic sorrows and anxieties. His sister still lingers on, and his daughter has been ill for a good while, and gets no better." She did recover, and in 1841 married Edward Quillinan, and died in 1847.

In another letter to Donne, he says of Southey, then Poet Laureate, who was receiving £1,000 for editing Cowper's Life, "He thinks Cowper's letters the most beautiful that ever were written." Spedding had a magnificent forehead which was exaggerated by his premature baldness when an undergraduate, hence FitzGerald writes, "Of course you have read the account of Spedding's forehead landing in America: English sailors hailed it in the Channel, mistaking it for Beachy Head."

At this time he was reading a great deal of Wordsworth, and busy with his own poems too; but the only thing published in this decade between 1832 and 1842 was a poem he wrote for *The Tribute*, a volume of verse by various hands which Lord Northampton got together to be sold for a charitable purpose. The poem was "Oh, that 'twere possible," etc., which is the nucleus round which *Maud* was formed eighteen years later.

In my brother's book are three little birthday poems and two others written at this time to my Aunt Sophy Rawnsley, the "Airy fairy Lilian" of his early poem, and Rosa Baring, both of whom lived near Somersby.

We seem to catch an echo of these two names in *Maud*—

Queen Rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
Queen Lily and Rose in one.

I saw Mrs. Duncombe Shafto when she was eighty-four, and she gave me a vivid account of those early days when she and my aunt (afterwards Mrs. Edward Elmhirst) were girls. She said: "You know we used to spoil him, for we sat at his feet and worshipped him; and he read to us, and how well he read! And when he wrote us those little poems we were more than proud. Ah, those days at Somersby and Harrington and Halton, how delightful they were."

At length, in 1842, the poems came out in two volumes. The first volume embraced the poems published in 1830 and poems published in 1832 with many alterations and several omissions and a few additions, *e.g.*, *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*, *The Blackbird*, and the exquisite little poems on Freedom. Volume II. was entirely new, and contained the *Morte d'Arthur*, subsequently embedded in the last of the Idylls. It has the famous lines—

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,

and the beautiful lines on Prayer, ending with

For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

Then there was besides the *Morte d'Arthur*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, *Ulysses*, and *Locksley Hall*, than which four pieces he never wrote anything better ; also *The Two Voices*, *The Talking Oak*, *The Lord of Burleigh*, *The Poet's Song* and *Break, Break, Break*, which was saved from destruction by my uncle, who, when the Poet was burning a lot of papers, seized it, saying : " You must not burn that ; it is one of the best things you have written."

" Oh, is it ! " he said, and put it aside.

In 1842 he put his money into a scheme which failed, the details of which he writes to my grandfather, and in 1845 Peel gave him a Civil List Pension of £200.

In the year 1844 Cecilia Tennyson was married to Edmund Lushington, Professor of Greek at the University of Glasgow. In 1847 *The Princess* came out ; but its lovely songs were only added to the third edition in 1850.

These beautiful songs mark the happy year of the Poet's marriage and the completion of *In Memoriam*, and his obtaining the laureateship, a veritable Annus Mirabilis.

It was in the year after Arthur Hallam's introduction to Emily Tennyson that Alfred met his future wife in Emily Sellwood. She was a first cousin of my mother's, both being nieces of Sir John Franklin, whose home was at Spilsby, and they had been brought up very much together, so much so that Emily signed her letters to my mother " Thy loving sister, Emily." In 1830 Emily Sellwood, having driven over with her parents

from Horncastle, was walking with Arthur Hallam in the " Fairy Wood " when they came on Alfred. He was immensely struck with her, and when he had to take her into church at his brother Charles' wedding—for Charles married her sister Louisa in 1836—he was even more taken by her grace and beauty, and her fine intellectual qualities; and when, in 1837, the family left Somersby, the Poet and his future bride were so far engaged that they corresponded for the next three years. In 1840 this correspondence was forbidden, as no prospects seemed to be opening or likely to open; indeed Emily, in a letter to my mother, says that she had definitely refused him two years back; but she always thought of him, and they each kept the sacred fire alight in their hearts, and when, in 1850, my mother brought them again together at our home at Shiplake on the Thames, there was nothing to bar the way. They were married there by my father on June 13, 1850, in Shiplake Church, by special licence. I have the licence, in which he is described as Alfred Tennyson of Lincoln Inn Fields, and she as Emily Sarah Sellwood of East Bourne, in the County of Sussex. Really they were both Lincolnshire people, and my father and mother were old friends from the same county and neighbourhood. My father was assisted by his curate, Greville Phillimore, and hardly any one was present at the wedding but a few relatives, viz. the bride's father, her brother-in-law, Mr. C. Weld (the husband of her sister Anne), and Edmund and Cecilia Lushington, and my mother, also my elder sister and my cousin, Jenny Elmhirst, who acted as bridesmaids, my younger sister in her

nurse's arms, and myself. I remember little of it, except that I walked behind my sister with a bit of syringa or mock-orange in my buttonhole. We all walked to the church, for Shiplake Church and Vicarage are only separated by a lane ; and of all that wedding party my cousin and I are now the sole survivors. On the very next day, my mother received a little note from both bride and bridegroom. It ran thus—

“ June 14, 1850.

“ MY DEAREST KATIE,—

I know you will rejoice to hear I am as happy and comfortable as even you could wish me. I must write again to tell you where to direct to us, probably somewhere near Weston-super-Mare, if not there. I owe you a great deal. Please tell my Daddy all except the *In Memoriam*. I am going directly. My best love and all thanks for kindnesses innumerable.

“ Thy very affectionate sister,

“ EMILY.”

“ MY DEAR KATE,—

“ You managed it all very well yesterday. Many Thanks.

“ Ever yours,

“ A. T.

“ Dubbie's ¹ fees must be come at as he can best manage. The clerk and the shirts are owing.”

On looking at the marriage licence you would see that it is dated *May fifteenth*, though the wed-

¹ An affectionate abbreviation of my father's name, Drummond.

ding day was June 13. The reason of this is, that my mother, who had undertaken to have the wedding from our house at Shiplake, and to see that Alfred had what was needed for the occasion, including a proper outfit and the wedding cake, found it impossible to get him to fix a date and stick to it. He was just then suffering from one of his fits of depression, which he once told me would come over him suddenly sometimes in a ball-room and which he only quite late in life discovered to be due to gout. The consequence was that he could not make up his mind, and he wrote to his mother only just before the wedding that he "should have written to let her know earlier, but that he did not know himself till just at last, as he could not make up his mind." His sister Mary also wrote in June, "Alfred maintains a cruel silence about his engagement, which I think is not fair towards his family, especially as the Rawnsleys know it."

And again, "Of Alfred as yet we have heard nothing. I suppose in the due course of time he will make known to his family what *he has done* or *intends* doing."

The result of this depression was that the date of the wedding hung uncertain for some weeks, until owing, says his sister Mary, to the persuasion of Edmund and Cecilia Lushington, but really still more to my mother's insistence, he brought himself to name the day, and in the beginning of the month wrote to my mother—

"DEAR KATE,—

"It is settled for the 13th, so the shirts may be gone on with."

His sister Mary, who had written in commiseration, "poor thing, I dare say he is miserable enough at times, thinking of what he is about to do," wrote afterwards of the wedding just as if it had been a funeral, beginning her letter: "Well, all is over. Alfred was married to Emily Sellwood last Friday. . . . *Friday, and raining*, about which I feel very superstitious. . . . Emily looked bright, they say. They were married at the Drummond Rawnsleys and the Lushingtons were there. . . . We received this morning a beautiful piece of bridecake. I hope they will be happy, but I feel very doubtful about it."

In a subsequent letter she says, "They were not married on a Friday, as we supposed, but on the Wednesday before, the 13th. We have heard from Emily since. . . . She wrote begging Mamma's blessing." In her next letter she writes, "Alfred, I suppose, will be here soon for there is a letter come for Emily here. How sad it seems to me all this. However, I have no doubt of her making him a good wife as she is so very fond of him." And when she had seen the bride and bridegroom she writes to the same friend, "Alfred makes an excellent husband." Writing again from Cheltenham, in July, she says: "Alfred and Emily are going to leave us to-morrow; they think of going to a house that has been offered them by Mrs. Marshall. She was formerly a Miss Springrice, the Queen's maid-of-honour. It is situated near the Lakes; they are offered it for as long a time as they like, and they very likely will stay there until they have got a house to live in in the neighbourhood of London. Alfred has not yet quite got rid of the hay fever,

but looks better than he did when he came to us."

And she begins a later letter, on August 5, 1850, with: "I write these few lines, dearest, to tell you Alfred's address, which I had forgotten to give you in my last, it is Tent Lodge, Conigston Water, Ambleside, Lancashire."

When once the plunge was taken all doubts, whether his own or his sister's, quickly vanished; and six months later he more was than happy, and wrote two charming stanzas in praise of his bride which I have in his own handwriting. For Tennyson made a little poem as they drove off to the train on the wedding day, and when he visited us some six months or so later he wrote it out with two additional stanzas in eulogy of his bride and sent it to my father. I have the original MS., and it runs thus—

"DEAR DRUMMOND,—

"I send you my poem, made for the most part in your own carriage, between Shiplake and Reading. Keep it to yourself, as I should have kept it to myself if Kate had not asked for it, *i.e.*, keep it till I give you leave to make it public.

"Ever yours,

"A. TENNYSON."

Vicar of this pleasant spot
Where it was my chance to marry,
Happy, happy be your lot
In the Vicarage by the quarry!
You were he that knit the knot.

Sweetly, smoothly flow your life!
Never parish feud perplex you,
Tithe unpaid or party strife,
All things please you, nothing vex you!
You have given me such a wife.

Have I found in one so near
Aught but sweetness aye prevailing?
Or through more than half a year
Half the fraction of a failing?
Therefore, bless you, Drummond dear.

Good she is and pure and just.
Being conquered by her sweetness,
I shall come through her, I trust,
Into fuller-orbed completeness,
Though but made of erring dust.

You meanwhile shall, day by day,
Watch your standard roses blowing,
And your three young things at play,
And your triple terrace growing
Green to greener every day.

Smoothly flow your life with Kate's,
Glancing off from all things evil,
Smooth as Thames below your gates,
Thames along the silent level,
Streaming through his osiered aits.

The "three young things at play" were my two dear sisters and myself, and my mother told us that as she drove with the Poet to Reading station that December morning she saw he was busy composing, and when he had finished writing she said: "Now I know what you have been doing, you must give me a copy of it." He said he would "send it to Dubbie," which he did.

Emily Tennyson was indeed all that the Poet says of her in the stanzas quoted above. How she struck people who had the luck to know her may appear from the following letter from Edward Lear, author of the *Nonsense Book* and artist, whose works adorn the houses at Farringford and Aldworth, and were greatly prized by the Poet.

Letters of Edward Lear, page 138.

"My visit at Farringford was very delightful in

many ways. I should think, computing moderately, that fifteen angels, several hundreds of ordinary women, many philosophers, a heap of truly wise and kind mothers, three or four minor prophets, and a lot of doctors and school-mistresses, might all be boiled down, and yet their combined essence fall short of what Emily Tennyson really is."

Written June 12, 1859.

The MS. of *In Memoriam* had been written out more than once and we used to hear cantos read aloud at Shiplake, where at least one, "Sweet Hesper-Phosphor" (No. CXXI.), was composed. Finally my mother had obtained leave to send it to Emily Sellwood, who wrote an excellent letter of heartfelt praise of "The Elegies," as they were then called, for the Poet had at one time thought of calling it "Fragments of an Elegy!" Fancy that! But she was almost afraid to send it. So she wrote to my mother on April 1: "My dearest Katie. . . . Do you really think that I should write a line with the Elegies, that is, in a separate note to say I have returned them? I am almost afraid, but since you say I am to do so, I will, only I cannot say what I feel." For the rest of letter see *Memories of the Tennysons*, page 123. It is this letter of hers that she refers to when she says: "Tell my Daddy all except the *In Memoriam*."

Mary Tennyson writes to a friend in Somersby in April 1850. "Do you know whether Alfred's book is out yet? I am so anxious to have it that I think I shall write to Moxon to send me one when ready. Don't you long to see it? How beautiful those poems are!"

In Memoriam was published in the wedding

month of June 1850, and in the Epilogue the Poet describes the wedding of his youngest sister, Cecilia, with Edmund Lushington, of Park House, Maidstone, and Professor of Greek in the University of Glasgow. The wedding took place at Boxley, near Maidstone, on October 10, 1842, as Tennyson and his mother and sisters had been living in 1841 and 1842 at Boxley Hall, and Park House was in that parish, and it was at Park House that Cecilia died, only the other day (in March 1909), aged 92.

Lushington first saw these stanzas on his own marriage three years after the wedding, when Tennyson said: "I have brought in your marriage at the end of *In Memoriam*," and showed him the stanzas.

In November of the same year Tennyson was appointed Poet Laureate in succession to Wordsworth. In a letter to my grandfather, written in November 1850, he says—

"I thank you for your congratulations touching the Laureateship. I was advised by my friends not to decline it, and I was even told that, being already in receipt of a pension, I could not gracefully refuse it; but I wish more and more that some one else had it. I have no passion for courts, but a great love of privacy, nor do I count having the office as any particular feather in my cap; it is, I believe, scarcely £100 a year, and my friend, R. M. Milnes, tells me that the price of the patent and court dress will swallow up all the first year's income."

The Court dress did not cost him much, as he went in the dress which had served for Words-

worth, who in turn had obtained it from the old poet Rogers. I have seen it, as it is still in the Wordsworth family, and I have often wondered how Wordsworth and Tennyson managed to get into it, for Rogers was a very little man, and they were both big. Tennyson managed better than Wordsworth, for Mary, writing in March 1851, says, " Alfred is in Twickenham ; he has been to Court and the Queen smiled sweetly on him " ; but about Wordsworth a story is told how the Queen at a drawing-room one day asked, " Who was that dear old man who was praying so long ? " " That, Madam, was Mr. Wordsworth, the Poet Laureate." The fact was that kneeling he found Rogers' smalls so tight that he either could not get up or feared to try. Apropos of Rogers, in a long letter to my grandfather, in 1845, written on four sheets torn from a ledger or notebook, Tennyson, after speaking of the pension which Peel had given him, sends Rogers' autograph to my aunt, and says : " I wrote to Rogers, thanking him for his kindness. I thought he must have been mentioning me to Peel ; he wrote me back a very pretty answer, which I send Sophy for an autograph of the old Bard. Would any one think that pretty little hand was written by a man somewhere between eighty and ninety ? Now, Sophy, if, as a matron, you do not care for autographs, or intend to lose it, or to give it away, why let me have it back again, for I have some value for it, particularly as the old man and I fell out one wet day in Pall Mall about half a year ago, when I said something that offended him, and his face flushed and he plucked his arm out of mine and told me I was affecting the smart." But you

can see this in Lord Tennyson's memoir of his father, which contains the greater part of this long and interesting letter.

The couple lived at Twickenham, after a short sojourn at the English Lakes ; in 1851 they were a good deal in Italy, where the first child was born, but never lived, and in 1852 back at Twickenham, where Hallam, the present Lord Tennyson, was born, and in 1853 (November 25) they removed to Farringford, which was to be their home for forty years. Their second son was born in 1854, and in 1854 came out in a newspaper *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. I once asked the Poet whether he had taken the metre of this poem from Drayton's poem of *Agincourt*, and he said, "no," but that in *The Times'* account of the Balaclava Charge there was the expression "Some one had blundered," and it got into his head, and he kept saying it over and over till it shaped itself into the burden of the poem, and so the line comes twice over in the first imprint of it. I have it, just as it was cut out of the *Examiner* newspaper, in which it appeared, and sent by the Poet to my grandfather. It is not much altered, but even in this newspaper cutting four lines are inked out and eight others written in at the side in his wife's handwriting, only six of which are in the poem as it is now printed. In Stanza 2, the lines :

For up came an order which
Some one had blundered

are now left out, and the next two lines :

"Forward the Light Brigade!
Take the guns!" *Nolan said,*

are changed to :

“ Forward the Light Brigade !
Charge for the guns ! ” he said.

Considering the expression which was the origin of the poem it is somewhat curious that in the version published with *Maud* in 1855 these two lines and the next six

Forward the Light Brigade !
 Was there a man dismay'd ?
 Not tho' the soldier knew
 Some one had blundered ;

are left out : and the words *some one had blundered* are not in the poem at all. Nolan was the first man to fall ; he was the Galloper who brought the blundered order, and his peremptory manner had very much nettled Lord Cardigan and precipitated this wild charge.

The omitted lines are now restored and undoubtedly the change is for the better, as indeed it is in all his alterations. To take an instance. In the 1832 volume the poem of *Ænone* opens thus :

There is a dale in Ida lovelier
 Than any in old Ionia, beautiful
 With emerald slopes of sunny sward, that lean
 Above the loud glenriver, which hath worn
 A path though steepdown granite walls below
 Mantled with flowering tendriltwine. In front
 The cedarshadowy valleys open wide.

You will notice four composite words in the last four lines, all without hyphens. In 1842 we have in place of these lines :

There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
 Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
 The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
 Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,

And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
 The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
 Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
 The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine
 In cataract after cataract to the sea.

An immense improvement! The picture of the mist in the pines is added, and the composite nouns have all disappeared, a new one—meadow-ledges—being used with a hyphen.

Again, compare the first edition of the *The Princess*—1847—with the third edition, to which the songs were added in 1850; you will find it was considerably recast in that third edition, and very much to its advantage, and in 1882, writing to a Mr. Dawson, who had brought out a *Study of Lord Tennyson's Poem, The Princess*, in Canada, the Poet tells him that the songs were not an afterthought. He had deliberated about putting songs in before the first edition came out. He adds: "You would be still more certain that the child was the true heroine of the piece if, instead of the first song as it now stands, 'As thro' the land at eve we went,' I had printed the first song which I wrote 'The losing of the child.'"¹

Charles Kingsley understood this when he wrote his review of the third edition in *Fraser's Magazine*. He says:

"At the end of the first canto, fresh from the description of the female college, with its professoresses, and hostleresses, and other Utopian monsters" [you must bear in mind that this was written nearly sixty years ago] "we turn the page, and

¹ This is printed in the "Life" by his son.

As through the land at eve we went

* * * *

O there above the little grave

We kissed again with tears.

Between the next two cantos intervenes the well known cradle-song,

Sweet and low, sweet and low,

Wind of the western sea,

perhaps the best of all ; and at the next interval is the equally well known bugle-song, ' The splendour falls on castle walls,' the idea of which is that of twin labour and twin fame in a pair of lovers. In the next, ' Thy voice is heard thro' rolling drums,' the memory of wife and child inspirits the soldier on the field, and in the next, ' Home they brought her warrior dead,' the sight of the fallen hero's child opens the sluices of the widow's tears ; and in the last, ' Ask me no more,' the Poet has succeeded in the new edition in superadding a new form of emotion to a canto in which he seemed to have exhausted every source of pathos which his subject allowed."

I have a letter from Sir G. (then Mr.) Grove, who was editor of *Macmillan's Magazine*, and of the *Dictionary of Music*, in which, after speaking of an article my father was contributing to his magazine, he says :

" . . . Thanks for the anecdote about ' The splendour falls.' He has several times told me that he meant to put some other word in place of one of the two '*wilds*.'¹ The last of those songs,

¹ And the *wild* cataract leaps in glory. Set the *wild* echoes flying.

'Ask me no more,' is the finest of all to my mind. It contains a whole three-act drama. I wrote a commentary on that once, but can't find it. But one of the most interesting things I know is to compare the two versions of the 'Rolling drums' and the sketch, 'Home they brought him slain with spears' (a regular *sketch* in every sense of the word) with the finished picture in *The Princess*, 'Home they brought her warrior dead.' I don't want to do a mere annotated *In Memoriam*, but to show all the innumerable points of connexion and contrast and repetition, and all the thousand subtle things that not one in a million knows about; e.g., how wonderfully instructive are the two additions, 'O Sorrow' and 'Dark Warder.' But I must stop.

"Yours very truly,
G. GROVE."

To the lovely little cradle-song, "Sweet and low," Tennyson wrote an alternative version, very pretty, but his wife thought the "Sweet and low" version would go better to music. I have got the alternative version in the Poet's own handwriting. The first verse runs thus:

Bright is the moon on the deep,
Bright are the cliffs in her beam,
Sleep, my little one, sleep.
Look, he smiles and opens his hands,
He sees his father in distant lands,
And kisses him there in a dream.
Sleep—sleep.

Father is over the deep,
Father will come to thee soon,
Sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west,
Under the silver moon.
Sleep—sleep.

The idea of the baby stretching out his hands to his father is found in Catullus, but his doing it *in a dream* is Tennyson's.

But there is yet a third and earlier version preserved by my uncle at Raithby along with autograph copies of "Break, Break" and "The Eagle." The Lincolnshire expression "claps the gate" and the use of the word "wold" seem to point to its being a Lincolnshire poem, possibly therefore written at Somersby, which they had left thirteen years before the songs in *The Princess* were published, and note that the word "blossom" for the babe comes twice over in *The Princess*, in Lady Psyche's lament for the loss of her little one.

"Ah me, my babe, my blossom, ah, my child,"

Who claps the gate
So late, so late?
Who claps the gate on the lonely wold?
O were it he
Come back from sea!
Sleep, my blossom, the night is cold.

Sleep, dearest dear,
The moon is clear
To light him back to my babe and me;
And he'll come soon
All under the moon,
A thousand miles on the silver sea.

There are other songs also in *The Princess*, "Tears, idle Tears," and "O Swallow," and the small, sweet idyll, "Come down, O Maid." This and the

pastoral pictures in *The Gardener's Daughter* are two idylls of unsurpassable beauty, and contain the best lines, in the Poet's own judgment, that he ever wrote.

The steer forgot to graze,
And, where the hedgerow cuts the pathway, stood
Leaning his horns into the neighbour field,
And lowing to his fellows. From the woods
Came voices of the well-contented doves.
The lark could scarce get out his notes for joy,
But shook his song together as he neared
His happy home, the ground. To left and right
The cuckoo told his name to all the hills;
The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm;
The redcap whistled, and the nightingale
Sang loud, as tho' he were the bird of day.

That is from *The Gardener's Daughter*, and now for *The Princess* :

Deep in the night I woke, she near me held
A volume of the Poets of her land :
Then to herself, all in low tones she read.

* * * *

Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height ;
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)
In height and cold the splendour of the hills ?
But cease to move so near the Heavens and cease
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted pine,
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire ;
And come, for Love is of the Valley, come,
For Love is of the Valley, come thou down
And find him ; . . .
. . . Let the torrent dance thee down
To find him in the Valley ; let the wild
Leanheaded Eagles yelp alone, and leave
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling watersmoke,
That like a broken purpose waste in air :
So waste not thou ; but come ; for all the vales
Await thee ; azure pillars of the hearth
Arise to thee ; the children call, and I
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,

Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet :
Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

“The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm,” of which the poet used to say that nine-tenths of the men and women of England would have been just as pleased with “The merry blackbird sang among the trees,” and “The moan of doves in immemorial elms and murmuring of innumerable bees” were, in his opinion, among the best lines he ever wrote, but this was before he had written those fine lines in his poem to Virgil or the song “Far, Far Away.”

He was fond of reading his own verses and always chose a certain few for reading aloud, among them *Guinevere*, *Maud*, and that grand poem the *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*. This was written for the Duke’s funeral in 1852. I heard him read it when it first came out and, young as I was, it made a great impression on me ; the lines are very fine, and as he rolled them out they were truly magnificent. It contains, too, one of the best instances in all literature of the solemnity given by repetition, and of the skilful breaking up of the lines in blank verse ; I mean this passage :

Your cannons moulder on the seaward wall ;
His voice is silent in your council hall
For ever ; and whatever tempests lour
For ever silent ; even though they broke
In thunder, silent.

Coventry Patmore having heard him read parts of *Maud* says, “His reading magnifies the merit of everything, it is so grand.”

The next volume that he produced was the *Maud*

volume in 1855, in which the *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, and *The Brook*, and *The Daisy* appeared.

The Poet, when at Shiplake, was casting about for a subject, and my mother said: "Why not take those charming lines in *The Tribute*, 'Oh that 'twere possible,' and make more of them." He did so, and he wrote a good deal of it in Sir John Simeon's garden at Swainston, in the Isle of Wight. He wrote the poem, as it were, backwards. Starting from the old nucleus and writing something to precede it, and then something more as introduction to that. He was never tired of telling of the lady whom he asked, when he had read that lovely canto, "Birds in the High Hall garden," "Do you know what birds those are that were calling 'Maud, Maud, Maud,' in the High Hall garden?" and who answered, "Oh, Mr. Tennyson, was it the nightingale?" Of course it was the rooks. Here I may as well say that the High Hall garden was not the garden of Harrington Hall, near Somersby, any more than the old brick house with its parapet at Somersby was the Moated Grange, or the mill in *The Miller's Daughter* any particular local mill, or *The Brook* the Somersby Brook. Though "Flow down, cold rivulet," *does* describe that, and there are frequent references to Somersby in *In Memoriam*, e.g. in Cantos X, XXVIII, C, CI, CII. His pictures were usually made up from many sources, and often he would put into a line or two of verse any noticeable natural phenomenon for future use in quite other surroundings.

For instance the lines—

Then as a stream that spouting from a cliff
Fails in mid-air, but gathering at the base
Remakes itself and flashes down the vale—

were published in *Guinevere* in 1859, but were written at Gavarnie in the Pyrenees in 1830 as just a notebook sketch of a waterfall from ten to twelve hundred feet high. He had used this sketch before in *The Princess* when he spoke of

The thousand wreathes of dangling water-smoke
That like a broken purpose waste in air,

and a similar expression of a picture occurs in *The Lotos-eaters*—

Some like a downward smoke, etc.

Maud was subjected to much adverse criticism, but it contains some of the most lovely lyrics in the English language. To be easily intelligible it should be read as a whole, and right through at a sitting. Who does not know and delight in "Come into the garden, Maud"? and what can be more charming than these lines from Canto XVIII?

I have led her home, my love, my only friend,
There is none like her, none.
And never yet so warmly ran my blood
And sweetly, on and on—
Calming itself to the long-wished-for end,
Full to the banks, close on the promised good.

None like her, none.
Just now the dry-tongued laurel's pattering talk
Seemed her light foot along the garden walk,
And shook my heart to think she comes once more;
But even then I heard her close the door,
The gates of Heaven are closed, and she is gone.

There is none like her, none.
Nor will be when our summers have deceased.
O, art thou sighing for Lebanon

In the long breeze that streams to thy delicious East,
 Sighing for Lebanon,
 Dark cedar, tho' thy limbs have here increased,
 Upon a pastoral slope as fair,
 And looking to the South, and fed
 With honey'd rain and delicate air,
 And haunted by the starry head
 Of her whose gentle will has changed my fate,
 And made my life a perfumed altar-flame.

* * * *

Let no one ask me how it came to pass ;
 It seems that I am happy, that to me
 A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,
 A purer sapphire melts into the sea.

Can anything be more beautiful ?

In 1859 the first four *Idylls of the King* were published. I saw the other day at the Tennyson Centenary Exhibition the first trial title page of the volume. The title affixed is

THE TRUE AND THE FALSE

Four Idylls of the King

and the Poet has drawn his pen through the first six words, leaving only its present title, *Idylls of the King*.

In 1862 the beautiful dedication to the memory of the Prince Consort was added ; and the Arthurian legend, in which he followed close the version of Malory, but engrafted on it a mystic meaning not from Malory, occupied him another thirteen years. Of *The Holy Grail* volume, which was published by Strahan & Co. in 1869, all the former volumes being issued by Moxon, 40,000 copies were ordered beforehand. In a letter to my father in 1869 he says :

“ In return for your gift [a book by Ed. Thring]

I send you my new volume (*The Holy Grail, Etc.*). Arthur is mystic and no mere British Prince, as I dare say you will find out."

The volume which contained the first four (*Enid, Vivien, Elaine and Guinevere*) beautifully reproduce the pictures from Malory, and often in Malory's identical language, for, as the Poet himself once pointed out to me, an Idyll only means a picture ; and he was very particular that it should be called Idyll and not Ïdyll. In the *Morte d'Arthur*, which is the best of all, Tennyson is simply giving Malory's legend, and in the four Idylls of 1859 there is no manifest enforcing of the mystic meaning of Arthur and his story ; though even then he had it in mind, and wrote to my father at that time, ten years before *The Holy Grail* volume came out, " You are of course quite right about the Idylls, they are mystic, Arthur is the soul." He wrote much of the Idylls in the New Forest, whither he would go and lie for half a day under a magnificent beech, or on a knoll commanding a view of the fern-clad slopes which burnt, as he describes it in *Pelleas and Ettarre*, like a living fire of emeralds. Once in the New Forest he spoke of this and complained " the *Spectator* said that was impossible, but I saw it."

After this date the Poet constantly contributed a poem to the magazines before he brought it out in a volume.

During the further writing of the Idylls (which was spread over thirteen years, and an introduction to *Vivien* added thirteen years later still, in 1885, called *Balin and Balan*) he brought out, in 1864, that very popular volume known as the

Enoch Arden volume. *Enoch Arden*, he told me, was founded on a true Norfolk story told him by Woolner, the sculptor. The volume contained also *Aylmer's Field*, *Sea Dreams*, that most beautiful classic poem *Tithonus*, which he rummaged out of a drawer where it had lain for twenty-five years for Thackeray to use in the *Cornhill*! *The Sailor Boy*, a very choice morsel, his remarkable *Experiments* in classic metres, the pretty *Dedication* to his wife, *The Grandmother*, *The Flower* and *The Northern Farmer*, the first of his very clever humorous poems in the Lincolnshire dialect. This poem he wrote quite correctly in the dialect he knew of old; but to be quite sure that he had got it right, for it was twenty-seven years since he had heard it spoken, he sent it to a Lincolnshire friend who, living in the north of the country, altered it all into the dialect he knew, which was more like Yorkshire, and Tennyson, then taking counsel with his old friends in the Somersby neighbourhood, had to alter it all back again. After that, his Lincolnshire poems were, one after the other, read to my father, or some member of our family, and he took the greatest possible pains to get every word correct. Once when I went to see him, he asked me how they pronounced *turnips* about Spilsby; he had been told "turmut's." I said, "No, 'tonnops,'" and some months later, going to see him again at Farringford, when I had forgotten all about the "tonnops," his first words to me were: "You were right about that word." He also said: "I think you are right about 'greät' not 'graät,' for I see it is sometimes spelt 'greet.'" This is an instance of his perfect

accuracy, for to many the distinction between "greët" and "graät" is hardly perceptible. His poems were always printed and kept by him for some time before he published; and many a new unpublished poem has he read to me, as to others, under the strictest promise of secrecy, in his study upstairs or in the garden, both at Farringford and Aldworth. Those were indeed delightful readings. *Owd Roa*, one of his last dialect poems, he read to my wife and myself, and subsequently he made me read it aloud to him and encouraged me to make suggestions on certain words, all of which, when it came out, I saw he had adopted. The lines he made most of, speaking them with a kind of awe in his voice, are in the Globe Edition printed in italics:

For 'e coomed thruf the fire wi my bairn i' 'is mouth to the
winder there,

and his eye fairly twinkled as he read the lines:

When 'e cooms to be deäð
I thinks as I'd like fur to hev soom soort of a sarvice reäd,

and mouthed out with splendid emphasis:

If I beänt noäwaäy—not now-a-däys—good for nowt,
Yet I beänt such a nowt of all nowts as 'ull hallus do as 'es
bid.

The Holy Grail volume of 1870 contained also *The Coming of Arthur*, *Pelleas and Ettarre*, and *The Passing of Arthur*, in which he used the *Morte d'Arthur* of his 1842 volume of poems, a gem which well bears comparison with any part of the *Idylls* both for beauty and pathos. *The Northern Farmer: New Style*, with its burden, "Coom oop,

proputtly, proputtly—that's what I 'ears 'im saäy," is also in this volume, and that truly wonderful classic poem *Lucretius*, than which I know of nothing of its kind finer in the English language. But then you must know something of *Lucretius* or you won't properly appreciate it. Still there are bits in which the beauty of the language is evident to all, *e.g.*, the lines about the sun—

nor knows he what he sees ;
King of the East although he seems, and girt
With song and flame and fragrance, slowly lifts
His golden feet on those empurpled stairs
Which climb into the windy halls of heaven :
And here he glances on an eye newborn,
And gets for greeting but a wail of pain ;
And here he stays upon a freezing orb
That fain would gaze upon him to the last ;
And here upon a yellow eyelid fall'n
And closed by those who mourn a friend in vain,
Not thankful that his troubles are no more.

We were speaking once of the passage he had taken from Homer and used both in this poem and also, though in slightly different form, in the old fragment *Morte d'Arthur*, about the abodes of the gods—

Where never creeps a cloud or moves a wind
Nor ever falls the least white star of snow
Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans—

and the Poet said : " Yes, that is Homer ; but I improved on Homer, because *I* knew that snow crystallizes in stars."

Homer, Sappho, Virgil and Catullus were to him sources of inspiration. But he did not simply imitate classical forms, for this, even in such beautiful work as Swinburne's *Atalanta*, is apt to give

us the feeling of something artificial. In *Ænone*, *Ulysses*, *Tithonus*, *Demeter* and *Lucretius*, the classical tradition " (I quote from Mr. Arthur Sidgwick) "is there in full detail, but by the poet's art it is transmuted, the material is all ancient, and so, in many subtle ways is the spirit, but the handling is modern and original. In his translations from the classics, which are only too few, Tennyson can only be called consummate. His version in one passage in the *Iliad* (viii. 552) makes all other translations seem second-rate. Let me quote a few lines.

As when in heaven the stars about the moon
Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,
And every height comes out, and jutting peak
And valley, and the immeasurable heavens,
Break open to their highest.

Truly an incomparable rendering."

Thus speaks one who is himself a consummate scholar and translator. Tennyson's metrical experiments also are quite excellent, especially the *Alcaics* on Milton, beginning—

O mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies,
O skilled to sing of Time or Eternity,
God gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages ;

Of the serious classic pieces the *Tithonus*, written twenty-five years before it was published is, I think, the most touching. To quote Mr. Sidgwick again, "The tale tells how the beautiful youth Tithonus was beloved of the Goddess of the Dawn, and her love bestowed on him immortal life, but they had both forgot to ask for immortal youth. The pathos of the boon granted by Love at Love's

regret thus turning out a curse—for the Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts—is the motive of the poem.

“Tithonus speaks :—

Alas ! for this gray shadow, once a man—
 So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
 Who madest him thy chosen, that he seemed
 To his great heart none other than a God !
 I asked thee, ‘ Give me immortality.’
 Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile
 Like wealthy men who care not how they give ;
 But thy strong hours indignant work’d their wills,
 And beat me down and marr’d and wasted me,
 And tho’ they could not end me, left me maimed
 To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
 Immortal age beside immortal youth,
 And all I was, in ashes. . . .
 Yet hold me not forever in thine east :
 How can my nature longer mix with thine ?
 Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
 Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
 Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
 Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
 Of happy men who have the power to die,
 And grassy barrows of the happier dead.

“ If, as has been well said, it is one of the most incomparable powers of poetry to make *sad things beautiful*, what better instance of the truth can we have than these singularly beautiful lines ? ”

In 1872 *Gareth and Lynette* and *The Last Tournament* came out, completing the series of Idylls, and in *The Last Tournament* is a simile taken from what he as a lad often witnessed, as he walked after nightfall along the sands at Mablethorpe.

as the crest of some slow-arching wave,
 Heard in dead night along that table shore,
 Drops flat, and after the great waters break,
 Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves,
 Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud,
 From less and less to nothing.

This accurately describes the flat Lincolnshire coast with its "interminable" rollers breaking on the sands after a storm, than which the Poet always said he had never anywhere seen grander ; and the chap of the wave as it fell on the hard level sand could be heard for miles.

It was on this shore that as a young man he often walked, rolling out his lines aloud or murmuring them to himself, a habit which was also that of Wordsworth, and led in each case to the peasants supposing the Poet to be only half-witted, and caused the Somersby cook to wonder " what Mr. Awlfred was always a-praying for," and caused also the fisherman, whom he met on the sands once at four in the morning as he was walking without hat or coat, and to whom he bid good morning, to reply, " Thou poor fool, thou doesn't knäw whether it be night or daä."

In 1863, when I was still a schoolboy and thought it more than kind of the great man to talk to me at all, he said : " A poet's work should be done by the time he is sixty. If I am to do anything more it must be in the next six years." This was said before the *Enoch Arden* volume came out. I replied that the best play of Sophocles was written when he was seventy, and as a matter of fact the volume which came out in 1889 was, as he told me himself, with the exception of one poem which was fifty years old, all of it the work of his eightieth year, and very good work it is. So, in spite of his having reached his sixtieth year, the next twenty years saw the production of no less than eleven volumes. Among these were his plays *Harold*, *Becket* and *Queen Mary*, but these were all written

after he had reached his sixty-fifth year, also the *Holy Grail* volume, and the three volumes, *Ballads and other Poems*, the *Teiresias* volume, and the *Demeter* volume. These later volumes do not possess the same lyric sweetness that breathes in the early poems. But they contain some of his finest work, in that grand poem *Rizpah*, in the stirring ballad of *The Revenge*, and in the two humorous Lincolnshire poems *The Village Wife* and *The Spinster's Sweet-arts*, to say nothing of the remarkable poem *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, which appeared in 1887.

I once read *The Spinster's Sweet-arts* at a penny reading at Farringford, in the proper Lincolnshire dialect, and next morning the Poet greeted me with "You gave me a bad night." "How?" I said. "Two of the maids sleep over my room, and they were laughing half the night at *The Spinster's Sweet-arts*." I saw by his humorous smile that he forgave me.

The story is full of humour, and as he told me himself, was entirely spun out of his own brain; his son having suggested when he was seeking for a subject for a new Lincolnshire poem that he should make an old woman talking to her cats.

She names her cats after her four suitors, and talks to them sometimes as cats and sometimes as if they were the men themselves, mixing them up in the same sentence and even in the same line; for instance—

Naäy, let ma stroäk tha down tell I maäkes thee
 smooth es silk,
 But if I'ed married tha, Robby, thou'd not' a been worth
 thy milk;

Thou'd niver 'a cotch'd ony mice but 'a left me the work
to do,
And 'a taæn to the bottle beside, so as all that I 'ears
be true ;

And again—

Hed I married the Tommies—O Lord,
To loove an' obaäy the Tommies ! I couldn't 'a stuck to
my word.
An' noän o' my four sweet-arts 'ud 'a let me 'ahed my oän
waäy,
So I likes 'em best wi' 'taäils when they 'evnt a word to
saäy.

It was from *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* that Tennyson selected the lines which he had placed upon the table in Farringford Church in memory of his son Lionel, who, when a career in the India Office seemed to be surely opening before him, died on his passage home from a visit to Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy of India. The lines are these :

Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worshipped, being true as he
was brave,
Good, for Good is Good, he followed, yet he looked beyond
the grave.

* * * *

Truth for Truth, and Good for Good ! The Good, the
True, the Pure, the Just,
Take the charm " for ever " from them, and they crumble
into dust.

Nothing annoyed him more than the remarks of stupid critics, for he was always unduly sensitive to criticism, and when they took the old man in the poem to be himself he was both angry and hurt. " Taking me," he complained, " for that old white-headed dreamer. I, who have not a white hair in my head," and he was then seventy-eight.

On his eightieth birthday, August 1889, my

brother, Canon Rawnsley, sent a very pretty sonnet to the aged Poet, to which both the Poet and his wife replied. Lady Tennyson said it was quite the best of the many birthday poems he had received, and he wrote himself :

“ DEAR HARDWICKE,—

“ I thank you for your sonnet ; it is one of your best, but it somewhat abashes me, for I am or feel myself overpraised.

“ Ever yours,

“ TENNYSON.

“ Sir Andrew Clark has forbidden me for the present to write letters, but he told me yesterday an anecdote about himself and the Shah which sounds like a bit of the Arabian Nights, and which I must violate his order to tell you. The Shah had much wished to see the Hakim, the great English Physician, and sent for him, but Clark, who had promised me that he would come down to Aldworth on that day, neglected to meet the King of Kings, whereat the King of Kings was infinitely wroth, and, as Clark said, ‘ If I had been one of his Persian subjects in Persia would like enough to have cut off my head,’ but when H.M. learnt that the Hakim had gone down into the country to look after the health of his old friend the poet, he made him one of the great Persian Order of the Lion and the Sword.”

Always desiring to be accurate, the Poet wrote again next day to my brother a line to say that the Order was not the Lion and the Sword but the Lion and the *Sun*. The sonnet is a very good one, and is published in a volume called *Valete*.

TO LORD TENNYSON ON HIS EIGHTIETH
BIRTHDAY

August 6th, 1889.

The four score years that blanch the heads of men
Touch not the immortals, and we bring to-day
No flowers to twine with laurel and with bay,
Seeing the spring is with thee now, as when
Above the wold and marsh and mellowing fen
Thy song bade England listen. Powers decay,
Hands fail, and eyes, tongues scarce their will can say,
But still Heaven's fire burns in thy hollow pen.

Oh singer of the knightly days of old !
Oh ringer of the knell to lust and hate !
Oh bringer of new hope from memory's shrine !
When God doth set in Heaven thy harp of gold
The souls that made this generation great
Shall own the voice that nerved their hearts was thine.

That in 1889, at the age of eighty, he should have published *Demeter* and other poems, all the work of his eightieth year, must be pronounced a most remarkable feat. Besides *Demeter and Persephone*, *Owd Roa* is in this volume, and *Romney's Remorse*, a strong and pathetic poem, *The Ring* and *The Leper's Bride* and *Vastness*. All these the Poet read to me in MS., and in *The Leper's Bride* he had a stanza, or two, which he read, and then said, "My wife and son won't let me put those in ; I don't know why, I see no harm in them." They were very fine lines and very forcible ; but perhaps rather too outspoken for our age. But all his life he had acknowledged the fineness and correctness of his wife's criticism, and never went counter to it. *The Thristle*, with its musical imitation of the bird's song, is like one of his early lyrics in brightness and joyous

life, and that triumph of poesy, *Crossing the Bar*, concludes the volume.

CROSSING THE BAR¹

Sunset and Evening star
And one clear call for me !
And may there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell
And after that the dark !
And may there be no sadness of farewell
When I embark :

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

This was composed as he crossed from Lymington to Yarmouth in the Isle of Wight and drove on to Farringford, and was written down at once. It is truly an inspiration. He desired that this poem should always be put last in any subsequent edition of his works. Three months after this 1889 volume came out, I met in the train at Winchester an eminent scholar (Dr. Montagu Butler, Master of Trinity, Cambridge), who had made an elegant translation of the lines into Latin elegiacs. He asked me what I thought the Poet meant by the notable lines, "When that which drew from out the boundless deep turns again home." I said, "The wave in the first instance." He had

¹ Printed by kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan.

taken it as the soul, but afterwards felt that it might be the wave, so he gave me an alternative version. Two days later I was at Farringford and asked the Poet which he meant; he said, "Of course I meant both." This was in March 1890. Later I obtained a copy done into Greek Sapphics, by Professor Lushington. I also have a copy of *Tears, Idle Tears* done into Greek Iambics, by Edward Thring, and a letter from his wife to my father, saying that Tennyson did not think the metre suitable for the poem. It is one of the sweetest lyrics ever written:

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the under world,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more. 1

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

In all his latest work there is evidence how constantly the thought of life hereafter was in his mind, and the smallness of mortal man compared

with the vastness of the universe, and still more of Heaven and immortality. I must not omit to notice the lines *Far, Far Away*. In his earliest days these words, he said, had always a singular charm for him, which in his old age he so touchingly describes. The heading of the poem, which is as follows, is :

FAR, FAR AWAY

(For Music).

What sight so lured 'him thro' the fields he knew
As where earth's green stole into heaven's own hue,
Far, far away ?

What sound was dearest in his native dells ?
The mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells,
Far, far away.

What vague world-whisper, mystic pain or joy,
Thro' those three words would haunt him when a boy,
Far, far away ?

A whisper from his dawn of life ? a breath
From some fair dawn beyond the doors of death,
Far, far away ?

Far, far, how far ? from o'er the gates of Birth,
The faint horizons, all the bounds of earth,
Far, far away ?

What charm in words, a charm no words could give ?
O dying words, can music make you live
Far, far away ?

He once told my brother that one of the lines he was proudest of in all his writings was "The mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells."

He alludes to the charm these words, "far, far away," had for him when a boy in a poem in his

later days called *The Ancient Sage* (see page 246, *Ballads, and Other Poems*), and he there goes on to speak of a singular power which he possessed as a young man. About this he once told me a very curious thing, viz., how at times, in his early manhood, he could by softly repeating his own name over and over put himself into a sort of trance, in which he seemed to be away from the body, and to be able, as it were, to stand aside and see "the wheels of the world pass under him," being all the time awake and his mind clear and active. The passage is as follows :

To-day ? but what of yesterday ? for oft
On me, when boy, there came what then I call'd,
Who knew no books and no philosophies,
In my boy-phrase "The Passion of the Past."
The first grey streak of earliest summer-dawn,
The last long stripe of waning crimson gloom,
As if the late and early were but one—
A height, a broken grange, a grove, a flower,
Had murmurs, "Lost and gone and lost and gone !"
A breath, a whisper—some divine farewell—
Desolate sweetness—*far and far away*—
What had he loved, what had he lost, the boy ?
I know not, and I speak of what has been.

And more, my son ! for more than once when I
Sat all alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the self was loosed,
And passed into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs, the limbs
Were strange, not mine, and yet no shade of doubt,
But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self
The gain of such large life as match'd with ours
Were Sun to spark—unshadowable in words,
Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.

It is interesting to compare this poem of his latest years with what, after a period of doubt and ques-

tioning, though not without hope, he said in *In Memoriam* :

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar stairs,
That slope through darkness up to God.

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all
And faintly trust the larger hope.

But at the end of this poem, *The Ancient Sage*, when now his faith in the Love of God is stronger than his doubt, he gives his final message—

Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,
And send the day into the darkened heart ;
And more,—*think* well ! *Do* well will follow thought,
And in the fatal sequence of this world
An evil thought may soil thy children's blood.

* * * *

But lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel
And climb the Mount of Blessing, whence, if thou
Look higher, then,—perchance—thou mayest—beyond
A hundred ever rising mountain lines,
And past the range of Night and Shadow—see
The High-heaven dawn of more than Mortal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision !

In 1892, sixty years after his “Lyrical Poems,” two small volumes came out. The first, in April, was the Play about Robin Hood and Maid Marian, called *The Foresters* ; the second, in October, was issued three weeks after his death ; this was called *The Death of Ænone, and Other Poems*, and contained a very pretty dedication to his wife, and when we recall the fact that between the writing of them and the publishing the Poet had himself crossed the bar, a touch of solemnity is given to the

volume in which the four last pieces are called *Faith*, *The Silent Voices*, *God and the Universe*, and *The Death of the Duke of Clarence*. We were at Farringford in January 1892, when he was working at the last poem. He read us what he had done, which was seven lines, and the finished poem had these lines in the middle, four being placed before them and six after them. They end thus : ¹

The face of death is toward the sun of Life,
His shadow darkens earth ; his truer name
Is "onward," no discordance in the roll
And march of that Eternal Harmony
Whereto the worlds beat time, tho' faintly heard
Until the great Hereafter. Mourn in hope.

A poet who could write like that at the age of eighty-two cannot be said to have lost the Divine fire whilst life was in him.

We have now gone through the different volumes of verse chronologically ; and if we had to choose one poem or volume of Tennyson on which his fame should rest to the exclusion of all others we should all, I think, without hesitation fix on *In Memoriam*. Sir Henry Taylor used to say that the introduction to *In Memoriam* was the finest Christian poem in the language, and it would be difficult to find any literary work which has done more than *In Memoriam* to resolve doubt

¹ It is very interesting to compare these with the last six lines in *Love and Death*, published in the 1830 volume—

Thou art the shadow of Life, and as the tree
Stands in the sun and shadows all beneath,
So in the light of great eternity
Life eminent creates the shade of death ;
The shadow passeth when the tree shall fall,
But I shall reign for ever over all.

and justify the ways of God to man. Like Milton's *Lycidas* and Shelley's *Adonais* it treats of the death of a rarely-gifted man snatched away before his time. But in addition to being, as Gladstone put it, "perhaps the richest oblation ever offered by the affection of friendship at the tomb of the departed," it differs from the other two poems as a living tree differs from a beautiful marble sculpture, for it is the living creed of the author. Bishop Westcott saw in it " (in the face of the frankest acknowledgment of every difficulty) a splendid faith in the growing purpose of the sum of life, and in the noble destiny of the individual man as he offers himself for the fulfilment of his little part." A very different writer, Professor Sidgwick, remarks that "Tennyson differs from Wordsworth because Wordsworth in his attitude towards Nature leaves Science unregarded. The Nature for which he stirred our feelings was Nature known by simple observation and interpreted by religion and sympathetic intuition." But to Tennyson, though a constant and close observer of all the beauties of Nature, "the Physical world was always the world known to us by physical science, and the Scientific view dominates his thoughts even when he feels its inadequacy to satisfy our deepest needs," when

A warmth within the heart would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And, like a man in wrath, the heart
Stood up and answered, "I have felt."

Sir Norman Lockyer, in his book *Tennyson as a Student and Poet of Nature* speaks of him as

a poet who, beyond all others that have ever lived, combined the gift of expression with an unceasing interest in the causes of things and in the working out of Nature's laws.

Of all his forerunners Dante alone wedded science to song, but science in Dante's day was restricted to Astronomy and Medicine, and it was the old world Astronomy, before Galileo, Tycho Brahé or even Copernicus and was still inextricably intertwined with religion. Dante's seven Heavens surrounding the earth and seven Hells inside it were blown to atoms by the discoveries in earth and sky of Columbus and Galileo. Hence, though Milton 300 years later used Dante's cosmogony, he used it with large reservations and larger additions, whilst Tennyson after the lapse of another three centuries was able to drop the medieval ideas about Heaven and Hell altogether.

Tennyson throughout his life was immensely interested in the stars, and Sir Norman notes his general interest in and knowledge of all the scientific questions of the day. "Tennyson," he says, "has shown that science and poetry, so far from being antagonistic, must for ever advance side by side," and he especially dwells on his extreme accuracy as an observer and the exquisite felicity of his language. In this he rivals Virgil whose happy choice of metre and language he himself describes in his poem to Virgil. This very notable poem is headed

TO VIRGIL,

Written at the request of the Mantuans
for the nineteenth centenary of Virgil's death.

This was in 1881, as he died B.C. 19. The

metre is singular, and though they are printed in four lines they are really rhyming couplets, each line having eight trochees and a long syllable. I will quote a few stanzas.

I.

Roman Virgil, thou that singest,
 Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,
 Ilion falling, Rome arising,
 wars and filial faith, and Dido's pyre ;

II

Landscape-lover, lord of language,
 more than he that sang the Works and Days,
 All the chosen coin of fancy
 flashing out from many a golden phrase.

III

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
 tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd ;
 All the charm of all the Muses
 often flowering in a lonely word.

This characteristic of Virgil must be familiar to all scholars. I will only mention one instance, that beautiful and touching line in *Æneid* VI, about the pale ghosts on the shores of Acheron

Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore.

How the pathos of the picture is enhanced by the appealing attitude of those outstretched arms, and the unutterable longing conveyed by the one word *tendebantque*, and then the musical charm of the last two words ! *ulterioris amore*.

There are seven more stanzas, the last of which runs thus—

I salute thee, Mantovano,
 I that loved thee since my day began,

Wielder of the stateliest measure
ever moulded by the lips of man.

I look on that last as one of the finest lines in English Literature.

Charles Kingsley calls the author of *In Memoriam* "the deliberate champion of vital Christianity and of an orthodoxy the more sincere because it has worked upwards through the abyss of doubt, the more mighty for good because it justifies and consecrates the aesthetics and the philosophy of the present age."

Besides this, beyond any other of his poems, it reveals to us the man, and all the more because it is like a private diary, for the Poet himself has told us that he wrote the cantos without the least intention of publishing them until he found that he had written so many. This adds greatly to its interest, and then the beauty of the thoughts is equalled by the charm of the language and its melody, and, as it is filled with pictures of home and college life, and of English scenery throughout the rolling year, it is relieved from monotony, and, as Kingsley says, "when too sombre it is lightened by sweet reminiscences ; when too light recalled to grief by stanzas that have the deep solemnity of a passing-bell." The peculiar metre too, has a fascination. The Poet thought that he had invented it, but was told, after it came out, that Sir Philip Sidney and Ben Jonson had both used it.

It is characteristic of the early years of the Poet that, having once lost the MS. of his first volume, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, and having reproduced them all from memory, he, in February 1850,

left the whole MS. of *In Memoriam* in a cupboard in his lodgings in London, and wrote to Coventry Patmore two or three weeks afterwards to try and recover for him "my book of Elegies, a long butcher ledger-like book," which fortunately Patmore was able to do.

I will not attempt an analysis of *In Memoriam*. But I once asked Tennyson whether he did not think such an analysis would be a great help, and whether he would not write one. He answered, "It has been done, and very well *by that lady*," meaning Miss Chapman. I will only here say with Mr. Walters that the conclusion of the whole poem is "that all is well, and that darkness shall be clear, that God and Time are the only interpreters, that Love is living, that the Immortal is in us."

Probably no poem is so largely quoted in sermons, speeches, books and papers, a sign that truths which all acknowledge are here most aptly and beautifully expressed. The whole of English literature for the last fifty years has been tessellated with beautiful expressions drawn from all parts of Tennyson's works. But I know of no more apt quotation than this which the Poet himself related to me. He had gone to Osborne to see Queen Victoria; she received him and put him at his ease at once by pointing to a chair and saying: "You and I, Mr. Tennyson, are old people, and we like to sit down." They talked; Tennyson lamented the socialistic and irreligious tendency of the age, and spoke rather despairingly; the Queen simply replied—

And yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill.

(*In Memoriam*, 51.)

“ I thought,” added the Poet, “ that that was very pretty of the Queen to answer me from my own writing.”

Having heard thus much about his poems, you may perhaps like to hear something about the man. He was always remarkable to look at, with his fine head, his olive complexion, and abundant black hair. This never turned grey, but as it thinned away in his later years it allowed the dome-shaped forehead to show, and occasioned the remark which he told me he was really proud to have heard from a mason who passed him in the street in London: “ There goes a Shakespeare-like fellow.” Tennyson was also always remarkable to listen to as well as to look at, being very widely read, possessed of a splendid memory, always original, and with an inexhaustible fund of humour. He was a man of large heart and liberal views. His tobacco jar held two gallons; he drank his tea in a bowl, saying, “ a teacup is such a niggardly allowance,” and he took his port by the bottle. My father, staying with him once at Aldworth, was much amused at seeing him decant a bottle of port and put a glass of water into the decanter, saying, “ Do you know why I do that, Drummond? It is because it makes it wholesomer and gives me one glass more.”

He was always very approachable by children and one of my earliest memories of the Poet is of him sitting on the sofa at Shiplake and saying:—

“ And oh, far worse than all beside,
He whipped his Mary till she cried.”

“ What is that? ” I said. “ Oh, you will know to—

morrow." I could not make it out, as I had forgotten that to-morrow would be my birthday, and my father and the Poet had driven over to Reading and brought back for me that most delightful of all children's books *The English Struwwelpeter*.

From his early manhood his eyesight had been weak, and he held his book close to his face to read by day, and by night often held a candle between his eyes and the book.

The moody attacks of his early manhood later in life left him; and never was there a more delightful companion at table or on a walk, when he would show himself to be a perfect mine of memories and good stories. Sir Frederick Locker Lampson, whose daughter married Tennyson's son Lionel, says, "when Alfred is quite at his best there is no one like him." His unconventionality always remained, but his kindness and simplicity increased with years. He was a good listener as well as a good talker; but he was a great stickler for the proper use of English, and pulled me up sharply for using the word "awful." "You have said that twice this morning; I can't bear the word." "Yes," I said, "I hate the use of the word, too, but each time I have used it in its legitimate sense, still I had better have done without it." On another occasion, as we were looking through a drawer full of letters to find a particularly friendly one he had lately had from Browning, he stopped me at the word *knōwledge*: "*Knōwledge* I say, and I think it is right." "Do you say *acknōwledge* too?" He thought a little and then said: "Yes, I do; it is a finer sound too." Sound was much to him; and of all spoken sounds, he said that the

language of Homer spoken by a Northern or Teutonic tongue was the grandest.”¹ A fine-sounding line had a great attraction for him. Walking on Blackdown one day, he sat down on the heather at the side of a deep worn cart track and spoke Burns’ lines :

Go fetch to me a pint o’ wine,
And fill it in a silver tassie ;
That I may drink before I go
A service to my bonnie lassie :

* * * *

The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
The glittering spears are rankèd ready,
The shouts o’ war are heard afar,
The battle closes thick and bloody ;

* * * *

He rolled out the last lines with delight and admiration, and said : “ I would have given anything to have written that.” On another occasion, years before, at Shiplake, having read aloud Matthew Arnold’s *Forsaken Merman*, he said : “ I should like to have written that.”

It was interesting to me, when, as a lover of Burns, in September, 1909, I visited Dumfries, to find in Burns’ cottage, and in the room in which he died, this poem written out and signed on the first page of a small quarto volume or note book by the Poet’s own hand in fine bold characters nearly a quarter of an inch long ; and in a book close by he had written his name thus : “ R. Burns, The Ayrshire Poet.”

¹ What finer sound, he would say, can you have than the oft-recurring *πόλυφλοίσβοιο θαλασσης*? But the Greeks never *polu floisboied* they *polu fleesbeed*.

Tennyson once told my sister that he thought the most beautiful lines he knew were in the anonymous poem *Forsaken* :

O waly waly up the bank,
And waly waly down the brae,
And waly waly yon burn-side
Where I and my Love wont to gae !

ending with—

And, O ! if my young babe were born,
And set upon the nurse's knee,
And I mysell were dead and gane,
And the green grass growing over me !

Of all English poets after Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, he thought most of Wordsworth and Keats. "If Keats had lived he would have been the first of us all," he once said to me ; and his admiration of Burns was very great too. His son tells us this in the *Memoir*. "Read," he said, "the exquisite songs of Burns, each perfect as a berry and radiant as a dewdrop." And again : "There never was an immortal poet if he be not one." He had the greatest reverence and admiration for Wordsworth, who in turn said he had been trying all his life to write a Pastoral like *Dora* and had not succeeded.

In *Elaine*, Lancelot says to Lavaine :

. . . . in me there dwells
No greatness, save it be some far-off touch
Of greatness to know well I am not great.
There is the man.

Tennyson once said : "When I wrote that, I was thinking of myself and Wordsworth.

All his life he spent many an hour in polishing, and kept his MS. and even the printed poem by him

for a long time before publishing, and never let it go until he had satisfied himself about each line and word (cf. *Tennyson Memories*, page 144).

To take an instance—on one occasion at Aldworth, on my first visit there, I saw him walking about the room looking at an etui case of his wife's which he held in his hand, in which was set a piece of stone called aventurine, brown with innumerable gold sparkles in it. "Look at it," he said, "see the stars in it! worlds within worlds." He was clearly bent on making a simile from it for the poem he then had in hand, *Gareth and Lynette*. He had the first line in three different ways:

Shone gem or jewel on their dewy hair.

There glanced
Or dew or jewel from their golden hair.
Or gem or jewel sparkled in their hair.

The second line in each case being :

Like stars within the stone aventurine.

But when the poem came out it was different from all these and read thus :

And the hair
All over glanced with dewdrop or with gem
Like sparkles in the stone aventurine.

Indeed accuracy and melody are characteristic of all his work. Certainly his truthfulness to nature was remarkable, also the purity of his writings is a thing to be grateful for. He wished, he said, to go down to posterity as Wordsworth will go down to it, as a poet "who uttered nothing base." One of his fears was that he should, by the

use of selections from his poems for school books, became distasteful to English boys and girls, as Horace was to Byron. He said to me one day with vehemence, "Don't let them make a school book of me, the boys will hate me."

But it is not so, I think. My experience is that the first introduction of boys and girls to Tennyson is the beginning to them of a delight which never fails, and I only hope that the boys and girls and young people of this generation will not take the critics for their guide who already begin to talk of Tennyson as early Victorian and semi-obsolete, but will just read him themselves, and allow their own judgment to guide them. They will never light on a poet who will give them more pleasure, and, though he may not have a strong power of invention or be able to make his characters live on the page as some have done, he has delineated many characters so that his lines cannot be read without emotion, and has left an imperishable mark on English Literature, weaving the golden thread of poetry into the texture of our lives and enriching the language with many a noble thought set in language of unsurpassed beauty. Undoubtedly he is one of the immortals. After all, it is his poetry that posterity will take note of, not his philosophy or his theory of life. Tennyson was always a poet. He had, as Mr. Sidgwick points out, "an inborn instinct for the subtle power of language and for musical sound, that feeling for beauty in phrase and thought, and that perfection of form which taken all together we call poetry. And he is, like Virgil and Milton, a true son of the Greeks." And besides being a master of melodious verse he

was essentially the Poet of the people, because he was all his life extremely English and patriotic and, hating "the falsehood of extremes," he was able to voice the common thoughts and feelings of the average Englishman in language which though stately was, as a rule, easily intelligible, and he liked to write for the people. No publication of his own gave him so much pleasure as the sending out as a present to the troops in the Crimea a thousand copies of *The Charge of the Light Brigade* because he heard that the men liked it. He was a hearty advocate for a nation in arms; and to one of the chief promoters of the Volunteer movement he wrote, over fifty years ago, "I most heartily congratulate you on your having been able to do so much for your country, and I hope that you will not cease from your labours, until it is the law of the land that every male child in it shall be trained to the use of arms." He was also a hearty advocate for drawing closer the bonds between the Motherland and the Colonies, about which he vehemently disagreed with his friend Gladstone. For a thoroughly English poem what can beat this? which is the first poem of Tennyson's that Wordsworth ever saw.

You ask me, Why, tho' ill at ease,
Within this region I subsist,
Whose spirits falter in the mist
And languish for the purple seas.

It is the Land that freemen till,
That sober-suited Freedom chose
The Land, where girt with friends or foes
A man may speak the thing he will.

A land of settled government,
A land of just and old renown,
Where Freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent.

Mons. André Chevrillon, in his recent book *The English Spirit*, says that what is most characteristic of the English is first the Spirit of action, secondly the spirit of poetry.

Tennyson knew how one influences the other and that—

The song that nerves a nation's heart
Is in itself a deed.

He was, as I have said, singularly sensitive to criticism, and particularly to the charge of plagiarism, or borrowing his words and ideas from others. He complained to me: "The critics won't allow me any imagination; they take a line, 'moanings of the homeless sea,' and say, 'moanings,' Horace; 'homeless,' Shelley. Churton Collins makes me borrow expressions from men I never even heard of. But of course the same things are seen, in all ages, and naturally described in the same language. In my last volume, in *The Progress of Spring*, I said:

The starling claps his tiny castanets.

The other day I saw it in a recent novel; they will say I borrowed it; but I wrote that line fifty years ago."

To me those walks over the heath at Blackdown, or talks in the summerhouse at Farringford, were an unspeakable delight. I especially cherish the memory of one meeting when the Poet was near

his eightieth year. Dean Bradley was staying with him, and he said to me, "How wonderful he is! I am the younger man, but he walks me off my legs." After lunch we were all looking at the phonograph which Edison had sent him, and at his son's suggestion he spoke some of his own lines into the machine. The Dean had selected the passage, and we listened to the sonorous tones, and saw the markings being made by the needle on the waxen cylinder; and then, sitting down all close together, by the window of the little upstairs room, we heard the phonograph give back the lines; the Poet listening with amusement to his own voice speaking to him.

Our last meeting was in the garden at Farringford, in the summer of 1892. On October 6 of that same year, with the bright moonlight streaming on to the bed where he lay, and with a volume of his beloved Shakespeare in his hand, he passed

To where, beyond these voices, there is peace.

On October 12 I followed in that solemn (I cannot call it *sad*) procession, for it all seemed such a fitting termination to a splendid life, which bore him to his rest in Westminster Abbey.

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